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ABSTRACT

The Newspaper Business section of the proceedings contains the following 13 papers: "Daily Newspaper Market Structure, Concentration and Competition" (Stephen Lacy and Lucinda Davenport); "Who's Making the News? Changing Demographics of Newspaper Newsrooms" (Ted Pease); "Race, Gender and White Male Backlash in Newspaper Newsrooms" (Ted Pease); "Race and the Politics of Promotion in Newspaper Newsrooms" (Ted Pease); "Future of Daily Newspapers: A Q-Study of Indiana Newspeople and Subscribers" (Mark Popovich and Deborah Reed); "The Relationship between Daily and Weekly Newspaper Penetration in Non-Metropolitan Areas" (Stephen Lacy and Shikha Dalmia); "Employee Ownership at Milwaukee and Cincinnati: A Study in Success and Failure" (Randy Reddick); "The Viability of the Comprehensive Daily Newspaper" (William B. Blankenburg); "Organizational Culture: A Shield Against Organizational Stress" (Barbara K. Petersen); "The Effects of Work Environment on Job Burnout in Newspaper Reporters and Copy Editors" (Betsy B. Cook and others); "Do Managers Forecast the Newspaper Industry's Economy?" (Virginia Roark and Gerald Stone); "The News Ombudsman, the News Staff and Media Accountability: The Case of the Louisville Courier-Journal" (Neil Nemeth); and "Effects of Joint Operating Agreements on Newspaper Competition and Editorial Performance" (David C. Coulson). (HB)

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# PROCEEDINGS OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF
# THE ASSOCIATION FOR EDUCATION IN JOURNALISM AND MASS COMMUNICATION

(75th, Montreal, Quebec, Canada, August 5-8, 1992).

## Part XV: The Newspaper Business.

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# Daily Newspaper Market Structure, Concentration and Competition

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J. Edward Gerald asked in 1958, "What is the natural trade territory of a newspaper?"[1] For decades, mass communication researchers investigated newspaper competition assuming that the city was the appropriate territory.[2] However, in 1975, Rosse presented the "umbrella model" of competition, which states that different types of newspapers compete across city boundaries.[3] Several studies about umbrella competition within metropolitan areas followed, but few efforts were made to look into competition outside of these metro areas.[4] This study will examine the market structure of the daily newspaper industry using the umbrella model and also will examine the extent of daily and Sunday concentration and competition within counties in 1983 and 1989.

## Literature Review

In 1968, Nixon noted that daily newspapers competing within the same city had all but disappeared in the United States, surviving only in the nation's largest cities.[5] He reported that in 1880, 61.4% of the cities with dailies had two or more. This figure declined to 42.6% in 1920, 8.4% in 1945 and 3% in 1968.

Just as Nixon talked about competition as a city phenomenon, Busterna also studied concentration in cities.[6] Understandably, results were similar. Busterna reported that the trend shown in Nixon's research and other studies had continued into the 1980s. By 1986, only 1.9% of cities with dailies had two or more. He predicted further declines.

This growing concentration within cities is a result of several forces at work in city newspaper markets.[7] These forces come together to create what Picard and Lacy call "interactive monopoly power."[8] This monopoly power within cities results primarily from the impact of economies of scale, the joint product nature of newspapers, and the tendency of advertisers to seek the largest readership.

In recognition of the fact that many dailies now circulate outside their city and even county, Picard moved away from the traditional way of researching concentration in two ways: first he looked at concentration measures rather than just counting dailies; second, he looked at the nation and metropolitan areas as ways of defining newspapers' geographic markets.[9] He said the relevant market is the specific national, regional or local markets in which various newspapers compete. After considering the national newspaper market and 30 local markets separately, Picard concluded that the amount of newspaper concentration increased as the geographic size of the market decreased. These 30 markets were from the 100 largest markets in the United States.

Picard based his examination of metropolitan competition on the umbrella model, which classifies newspapers into four layers based on geography and news content: metropolitan dailies, satellite-city dailies, suburban dailies and a variety of weekly newspapers, shoppers and total market coverage publications. Metro dailies cover a wide geographic area and provide extensive national and international news, as well as local news about the metro area. Satellite dailies are those published away from the immediate central city of a metropolitan area. They also provide national and international coverage, but they are more local in nature than metro dailies. Suburban dailies are those dailies found within the metropolitan area but outside the central city. They are primarily local in nature. The weekly layer layer is almost entirely local.

Results of Picard´s study indicate that newspaper markets are highly concentrated compared to other industries. He pointed out that a weakness was the inclusion of the broad metropolitan area as the market. This would indicate that all suburban dailies were competing, when in fact they probably would not.

A further limitation of this study is its reliance totally on measures of concentration. While concentration and competition are generally related, the degree of relationship varies from industry to industry. In some industries, a market with two firms will act like a monopoly, while in others two firms will be extremely competitive.

Research suggests that newspaper markets are more competitive than their concentration levels would indicate. Litman and Bridges reported in 1986 that intracity daily newspaper competition, which usually means only two dailies, resulted in increased financial commitment to the newsroom.[10] Since then, several studies of the financial commitment approach have supported it, although not all studies have.[11] A national study of daily umbrella competition has reported that as the penetration of competing dailies within a county increases, the newshole of a newspaper and the percentage of the newshole given local coverage increases.[12] In a smaller-sample study, umbrella competition was also negatively related to reporter work load, which was in turn related to balance in controversial stories.[13]

As mentioned above, most studies of umbrella market structure and competition have examined metropolitan areas, with little effort to look at the market structure in outstate areas. One examination of Michigan found that the potential for umbrella competition was extensive.[14] In 1986, 71% of the 83 counties in Michigan had at least one metro daily and one other daily each with 5% or more penetration in the county.

The Michigan study also examined the potential for competition within layers of the umbrella model. Rosse had said little intralayer competition would occur because newspaper markets would not overlap.[15] However, both metro and satellite dailies have been extending their geographic markets during the past decade and in doing so have increased the probability that intralayer daily competition will take place.[16] Indeed, the Michigan study found that 41% of the counties had two or more metro dailies each with 5% or greater penetration and 42% of the counties had two or more satellite dailies each with 5% or greater penetration. It appears there may be a greater potential for intralayer competition at the county level than suggested by earlier studies that concentrated on cities as a daily's geographic market.

Research about newspaper concentration and competition is important because, as Picard said, the lack of competition and a high degree of concentration can lessen access to media channels and negatively affect the diversity of ideas.[17] In fact, a study by Lasorsa found that as the number of newspapers in a county increased, the diversity of opinions in a community increased.[18] Another study found that as the number of dailies in a county increased, the margin of victory in U.S. senatorial elections decreased.[19] These recent studies are consistent with earlier research on cross-ownership of media firms that found media monopolies resulted in people using media less and being less well informed.[20]

If, as some research suggests, newspaper competition within counties contributes to the functioning of democracy, it is in the country's interest to promote competition where possible. But the ability of public policy to encourage competition is related to an accurate understanding of the extent and nature of that competition. Thus, this study will look at the umbrella market structure and the degree of concentration and competition in the U.S. newspaper industry based on a different geographic market than has been previously used, the county.

Three reasons for using the county as a standard daily newspaper geographic market are: (1) The traditional way of evaluating competition and concentration has been based on the city as the geographic market, but many dailies circulation outside the city; (2) the retail trade zone is not a standardized geographic area, which means it varies with newspaper and across time; (3) research cited above has found that competition measured at the county level is related to content variations. Surveying individual newspapers to determine their geographic market would be the most accurate way to explore competition, but such an undertaking is financially prohibitive when dealing with large numbers of daily newspapers. The county appears to be the most useful standardized geographic areas for measuring newspaper markets.

This study will answer four research questions. The first two deal with umbrella market structure, and the second two concern concentration and competition levels within counties. The research questions are:

1. What percentage of counties in the U.S. had dailies from two or more of the umbrella model layers in 1983 and 1989?

2. What percentage of counties in the U.S. had two or more dailies from the same umbrella model layer in 1983 and 1989?

3. How concentrated and competitive were local daily newspaper markets in 1983 and 1989?

4. How concentrated and competitive were local Sunday newspaper markets in 1983 and 1989?

## Method

Standard Rate and Data Service (SRDS) data were taken from two publications.[21] SRDS reports daily and Sunday circulation and penetration by county for every daily newspaper with 5% or more penetration within the county. The data are from the Audit Bureau of Circulation and sworn statements filed with the Standard Rate and Data Service. While the exact dates for the circulation data varied, most of the data represent average daily circulation for the year ending in the September before the year of publication. For example, most of the data in the 1984-1985 edition, which was published in 1984, came from September 1983.

The first two questions were answered by counting all of the dailies that fit within the three daily layers of umbrella competition in all counties, parishes and independent cities listed in the SRDS books.[22] _Metro dailies_ were all dailies published in the central city of a Metropolitan Statistical Area, as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau. _Suburban dailies_ were all dailies published within a MSA but outside the central city. Satellite dailies were defined as all other dailies. Newspapers from the weekly layer were not included here because complete data for all counties was not available to the researchers.

The two questions relating to concentration and competition were answered by randomly selecting 500 counties from all counties, parishes and independent cities listed in the SRDS 1984-85 and 1990-91 newspaper circulation books.[23] Samples were used rather than the population because of resource constraints.

Before answering the third and fourth questions, the sample data should be evaluated for how well it represents the population. Based on Table 1, 70.4% of the counties in 1983 and 69.3% of the counties in 1989 had two or more dailies each of which had 5% or more of penetration in the county. However, the percentage of counties in the 1983 and 1989 samples with two or more dailies was about 76%. With a standard error of approximately 2.2%, for the two years, the samples over-represent the competitive markets, but are still within three standard error of the population proportion.

Concentration was then measured in four ways: the one-firm concentration, two-firm concentration, three-firm concentration, and the Herfindahl-Hirschman index.[24] Competition was measured using the number of daily newspapers with 5% or more of county penetration and the competition index.

The one-firm, two-firm, and three-firm concentration measures were the percentage of circulation controlled by the largest circulation newspapers, the two largest circulation newspapers, and the three largest circulation newspapers, respectively. The higher the percentage for each of these, the more concentrated the market.

The Herfindahl index is a way of placing concentration on a continuum from 10000/n to 10000. The index is determined by squaring the market share (percentage of all sales) of each firm and adding them up. A monopoly would equal 10000, determined by squaring 100 percent, while a market with 100 firms, each with 1 percent would equal 100.

Of the two competition measures, the first is simply the number of dailies in the county. This measure has been used in previous studies,[25] but it does not measure the intensity of the competition, based on market share. The other competition measure is a competition index taken from research about the impact of direct newspaper competition.[26] It is based on the assumptions that media managers react to the firm that is closest to theirs in market share and that equal distribution of a market is the most intense competition. The competition index is determined by subtracting the market penetration of a newspaper from the penetration of the largest circulation newspaper in the market. If a newspaper is the largest, its penetration is subtracted from the next largest. The absolute value is then used.

The competition index results in a figure from zero to 100, with zero being the most intense competition and 100 being a monopoly. Because the competition index is a measure of competition between two firms rather than a measure of the entire market, it was determined here by taking the two newspapers that had the largest circulations.

## Results

The first research question asked what percentage of counties in the United States had dailies from two or more layers in 1983 and 1989. Table 1 shows that in 1983, 45.5% of the U.S. counties had at least one daily from two or more layers of the umbrella model, which was determined by summing the fifth through eighth categories in the table. This declined slightly to 43.8% in 1989.

INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

The second research question asked what percentage of counties in the United States had two or more dailies from the same layer of the umbrella model. In 1983, 48.4% of the counties had two or more dailies from then same layer. This was determined by summing the third, fourth, and sixth through eighth categories in the Table 1. The percentage decreased slightly to 47.2% in 1989.

Interestingly, 23.5% of the 3,102 counties had the potential for both intralayer and interlayer competition in 1984. These were the markets that had either two metro dailies and one satellite or suburban daily or two satellite or suburban dailies and at least one metro daily. This percentage declined to 21.7% in 1989, but the percentage of counties that had two or more metro dailies and two or more other types of dailies was stable at 2.5% from 1983 to 1989.

In 1989, 29.6% of the counties had only one daily newspaper with 5% or more penetration, compared to 28.5% in 1983. In both years, 1.1% of the counties had no dailies that reached 5% or more penetration.

The third research question asked how concentrated and competitive local daily newspaper markets were in 1983 and in 1989. Table 2 shows that counties in the 1983 sample averaged 2.4 dailies with 5% or greater penetration, with a standard error of .06. The level was 2.34 in 1989, with the same standard error.

INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

The average one-firm concentration was 73.2% in 1983 and 73.1% in 1989. The two-firm concentration level was 92.5% in 1983 and 93.4% in 1989. The three-firm concentration was 97.9% in 1983 and 98.5% in 1989.

The average competition index for 1983 equalled 53.21, with a standard error of 1.51. This means that in the average market, the leading newspaper had about 53 percentage points more penetration than did the second most circulated daily. The average competition index equalled 52.41 in 1989, with a standard error of 1.5.

The average Herfindahl-Hirschman index for 1983 was 6465, with a standard error of 106. In 1989, the Herfindahl equaled 6453, with a standard error of 105.

Three of the five concentration and competition measures increased slightly from 1983 to 1989, but none of these were statistically significant. The changes were probably due to sampling error.

The data presented here indicate that the average market was fairly concentrated. However, the average includes 118 markets in 1983 and 1989 that had only one daily. When these are removed, the picture changes. Table 3 gives the concentration and competition measures without these monopoly counties. The average number of dailies increased to 2.84 in 1983 and 2.76 in 1989. The one-firm concentration dropped to 64.8% in 1983 and 64.7% in 1989. However, the two- and three-firm concentration measures changed only slightly.

INSERT TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

Both the Herfindahl and competition indices dropped noticeably without the monopoly markets. The Herfindahl declined by more than 1,100 for both 1983 and 1989, while the competition index dropped by more than 15 points for both years. Just as with the the data in Table 2, no statistically significantly changes were found between 1983 and 1989.

The fourth research question asked how concentrated and competitive the local Sunday newspaper markets were in 1983 and 1989. Table 4 shows a more concentrated Sunday industry than daily industry. The average county in 1983 had only 1.98 Sunday newspapers, with penetration equal or greater than 5%, and a standard error of .05. By 1989, the average county had 1.96 Sunday newspapers, with a standard error of .04.

INSERT TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE

The one-firm concentration for Sunday newspapers was 77.3% in 1983 and 77.2% in 1989. The two-firm concentration was 95.4% in 1983 and 95.5% in 1989. The three-firm concentration was 99.2% in 1983 and 99.4% in 1989.

The average competition index equaled 59.29 in 1983, with a standard error of 1.62. It equalled 58.92 in 1989, with a standard error of 1.6. The average Herfindahl index was 7067 in 1983 with a standard error of 111, while the 1989 Herfindahl was

7040, with a standard error of 109. None of the differences between 1983 and 1989 were statistically significant.

Just as with the daily newspaper industry, these figures include counties that were virtually monopolies in the daily newspaper market. If these 173 counties in 1983 and 172 counties in 1989 are dropped from the analysis, concentration declines and competition increases considerably. Table 5 contains descriptive data without the one-daily counties.

After the monopolies were dropped, the one-firm concentration dropped to 65.1% in 1983 and 64.9% in 1989, from 77.3% and 77.2%, respectively. The two- and three-firm concentration declined only slightly without the monopoly counties.

INSERT TABLE 5 ABOUT HERE

Just as with the daily statistics, the Sunday Herfindahl and competition indices dropped considerably without the monopoly markets. The Herfindahl for 1983 dropped from 7067 to 5476, while the Herfindahl for 1989 dropped from 7040 to 5454. The competition index for 1983 dropped from 59.29 to 37.21, and the competition index for 1989 dropped from 58.92 to 36.9. None of the differences between 1983 and 1989 were statistically significant.

When the monopoly counties are removed from the data, the levels of concentration and competition for weekday and Sunday circulation were about equal. With the monopoly counties included, the Sunday circulation markets were more concentrated. The difference represents the influence of the 55 counties that have weekday competition but not Sunday competition.

## Discussion

The description of umbrella market structure with the county as the geographic market suggests a great deal more potential for competition than do studies that use the city as the geographic market. More than 70% of the counties in 1983 and 69% of the counties in 1989 had at least two dailies reaching more than 5% of the households.

Just under 50% of the counties had at least one newspaper each from two of the layers of the umbrella model, and about the same percentage had two or more dailies from the same umbrella layer. Almost a quarter of the approximately 3,100 counties in both years had the potential for both intralayer and interlayer daily competition.

This structure implies the presence of competition, it does not actually reveal the levels of concentration and competition. Samples of counties were used to explore these levels. The data from the samples were consistent with Picard's conclusion that the daily newspaper industry is highly concentrated, compared to some other types of U.S. industries. This study found that in both weekday and Sunday markets for both years the Herfindahl index exceeded the level considered to be high concentration by the Justice Department.[27] The competition index showed that the leading newspaper tended to dominate penetration within the market.

On first reflection, the weekday markets appear more competitive and less concentrated than the Sunday newspaper markets, although the differences did not quite reach statistical significance at the $p < .05$ level. This difference reflects the fact that many daily newspapers do not have a Sunday edition. In

1990, the American Newspaper Publisher's Association reported that 857 of the 1,626 U.S. dailies had Sunday editions in 1989.[28] When monopoly markets were dropped, the weekday and Sunday markets were equivalent in concentration and competition for both years.

Although both the daily and the Sunday newspaper markets were fairly concentrated at the county level, the newspaper industry was far more competitive in 1983 and 1989 than would be suggested by earlier studies using the city as the geographic market. In fact, the average county had more than two dailies and almost two Sunday newspapers with 5% or more penetration. When the monopoly markets were removed, the counties averaged 2.8 dailies in 1983 with a Herfindahl of 5365 and competition index of 38.7. These levels remained about the same six years later.

Looking at the distribution patterns for weekday markets, 22% of the markets in 1983 and 21% in 1989 had a Herfindahl under 4500, and 22% in 1983 and 1989 had a competition index of under 20.

Just as important to consider is the trend within the industry. Contrary to the continuing decline in intracity competition, this intercity daily competition held steady between 1983 and 1989. Overall, the industry was far more competitive than many have thought and it was not declining in that competitiveness.

As with Picard's research, the level of concentration was related to the population size of the county. Larger counties and those nearer urban centers were more likely to have competition and to be less concentrated than the smaller and more isolated counties. This does not mean, however, that these more isolated counties lacked competition. Missing from this analysis is the role of the weekly layer of the umbrella model. The umbrella research about Michigan found that 88% of the counties had at least one weekly and one daily.[29] Additional research has found that weekly and satellite daily penetration levels within a county have a strong negative correlation.[30]

## Conclusions

Five conclusions stand out from this study:

1. The county seems like the appropriate standard geographic market for newspapers. It is more realistic than using cities, and it does not have the problems, mentioned by Picard, that come with using an entire metropolitan area.

2. On average, the Sunday newspaper markets were more concentrated than the daily newspaper industry because of fewer newspapers and fewer counties with Sunday circulation.

3. The newspaper industry was more concentrated than many industries, but it contained far more competitive markets than most previous research has indicated.

4. The degree of concentration and competition remained fairly stable during the latter part of the 1980s.

5. The nature and stability of the umbrella market structure suggest that the industry might become more competitive if newspaper managers increasingly pursue the regional competition that has been described in recent magazine and newspaper articles.[31]

The major limits of this study are its failure to include weeklies in its analysis of the umbrella structure and the over-representation of competitive markets that occurred in the samples. Inclusion of weeklies and a more representative sample would better describe the extent of newspaper competition. However, the over-representation of competitive markets does not nullify the conclusions. It simply suggests that the average concentration may be slightly more than indicated.

Future studies that examine a longer period of time would be useful in identifying the long-term·trend and how long the umbrella competition has been occurring in U.S. newspaper markets.

## ENDNOTES

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2. For examples, see Stanley K. Bigman, "Rivals in Conformity: A Study of Two Competing Dailies," Journalism Quarterly 25:127-131 (Spring 1948); Robert M. Entman, "Newspaper Competition and First Amendment Ideals: Does Monopoly Matter?" Journal of Communication 35(3):147-165 (1985); Gerald L. Grotta, "Consolidation of Newspapers: What Happens to the Consumer?" Journalism Quarterly 48:245-250 (Summer 1971); Stephen Lacy, "The Effects of Intracity Competition on Daily Newspaper Content," Journalism Quarterly 64:281-290 (Summer-Autumn 1987); Maxwell McCombs, "Concentration, Monopoly, and Content," in Robert G. Picard, James P. Winter, Maxwell E. McCombs, and Stephen Lacy, eds. Press Concentration and Monopoly (Norwood, NJ: Ablex, 1988), pp. 129-37; Galen Rarick and Barrie Hartman, "The Effects of Competition on One Daily Newspaper's Content," Journalism Quarterly 43:459-463 (Autumn 1966); Wesley F. Willoughby, "Are Two Competing Dailies Better Than One?" Journalism Quarterly 32:197-204 (Spring 1955); and David H. Weaver and L. E. Mullins, "Content and Format Characteristics of Competing Daily Newspapers," Journalism Quarterly, 52:257-264 (Summer 1975).

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11. For examples of support, see Doris L. Candussi and James. P. Winter. "Monopoly and Content in Winnipeg," in Robert G. Picard, James P. Winter, Maxwell E. McCombs, and Stephen Lacy, eds. Press Concentration and Monopoly (Norwood, NJ: Ablex, 1988), pp. 139-145; Shu-ling Chen Everett and Stephen E. Everett. "How Readers and Advertisers Benefit from Local Newspaper Competition," Journalism Quarterly 66:76-79, 147 (1989); Stephen Lacy, "Newspaper Competition and Number of Press Services Carried: A Replication," Journalism Quarterly 67:79-82 (1990); Stephen Lacy and Frederick Fico. "Financial Commitment, Newspaper Quality and Circulation: testing an Economic Model of Direct Newspaper Competition," Unpublished paper presented to the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Washington, DC, August 1989; Wayne Wanta, Thomas J. Johnson, and John Williams. "The Effects of Competition on the Content of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch." Unpublished paper presented to the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Minneapolis, August 1990; H. Allen White, and Julie L. Andsager, "Winning Newspaper Pulitzer Prizes: The (Possible) Advantage of Being a Competitive Newspaper," Journalism Quarterly 67:912-19 (1990); and George Sylvie, "A Study of Civil Disorder:The Effect of News Values and Competition on Coverage by Two Competing Daily Newspapers," Newspaper Research Journal, Winter 1991, pp. 98-113

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21. 1984/85 Newspaper Circulation Analysis, Vol. 66, (Wilmette, IL: Standard Rate & Data Service, 1984) and 1990/91 Newspaper Circulation Analysis, Vol. 72, (Wilmette, IL: Standard Rate & Data Service, 1990).

22. All counties and parishes were included. Of the independent cities listed, only those with more than 100,000 population were treated as separate geographic entities.

23. The counties, parishes and independent cities were select by generating 500 random numbers within the range of 1 to the total number of counties. In applying these numbers, only 499 counties were select for 1983 and 498 for 1989. In figuring the concentration and competition levels, the counties that had no daily newspapers with 5% or more penetration were dropped from analysis. This involved dropping one county from the weekday analysis in 1983, two from weekday analysis in 1989, seven from

Sunday analysis in 1983 and five from Sunday analysis in 1989.

24. These measures were all used in Picard, 1988, *op*. *cit*.

25. Lasorsa, 1990, *op* *cit*., and Vermeer, 1991, *op*. *cit*.

26. Lacy, 1987, *op*. *cit*., and Lacy, 1990, *op*. *cit*.

27. See Picard, 1988, *op*. *cit*.

28. "'90 Facts About Newspapers," (Washington D.C.: American Newspaper Publishers Association, 1990).

29. Lacy and Dalmia, *op*. *cit*.

30. Stephen Lacy and Shika Dalmia, "The Relationship Between Weekly and Daily Penetration in Non-metropolitan Areas," Unpublished paper, Michigan State University, 1992.

31. Klein, *op*. *cit*., and Jones, *op*. *cit*.

## Table 1

### Percentage of Counties* with Various Types of Daily Newspaper Market Structures

| Types of Structure | 1983 | 1989 |
|---|---|---|
| No daily newspapers | 1.1 | 1.1 |
| Only one daily | 28.5% | 29.6% |
| Two or more metro dailies but no suburban or satellite dailies[1] | 3.5 | 3.0 |
| Two or more satellite dailies but no suburban or metro dailies[1] | 21.4 | 22.5 |
| One metro daily and either a suburban or satellite daily[2] | 22.0 | 22.1 |
| One metro daily and two or more suburban or satellite dailies[3] | 15.5 | 13.7 |
| Two or more metro dailies and one suburban or satellite daily[3] | 5.5 | 5.5 |
| Two or more metro dailies and two or more of suburban or satellite dailies[3] | 2.5 | 2.5 |
| Number of counties | 3,102 | 3,104 |

* Number of counties includes parishes in Louisiana, districts in Alaska, and independent cities in some states. Maryland and Nevada each had one independent city. Virginia had 41 independent city, but only the nine with populations greater than 100,000 were counted as markets here.

[1] These counties have the potential for intralayer competition.
[2] These counties have the potential for interlayer competition.
[3] These counties have the potential for both intralayer and interlayer competition.

## Table 2

## Concentration and Competition for Daily Newspaper Weekday Markets

| | 1983 | | 1989 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Mean | Standard Error | Mean | Standard Error |
| Number of Dailies in the County | 2.40 | .06 | 2.34 | .06 |
| One Firm Concentration | 73.2% | .905 | 73.1% | .914 |
| Two Firm Concentration | 92.5% | .593 | 93.4% | .480 |
| Three Firm Concentration | 97.9% | .312 | 98.5% | .227 |
| Competition Index | 53.21 | 1.51 | 52.41 | 1.50 |
| Herfindahl-Hirschman Index | 6465 | 106 | 6453 | 105 |
| Total County Circulation | 32,238 | 4155 | 31,653 | 4226 |
| N | 497 | | 496 | |

## Table 3

## Concentration and Competition for Daily Newspaper Weekday Markets, Excluding One-Newspaper Counties

| | 1983 | | 1989 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Mean | Standard Error | Mean | Standard Error |
| Number of Dailies in the County | 2.84 | .06 | 2.76 | .06 |
| One Firm Concentration | 64.8% | .795 | 64.7% | .808 |
| Two Firm Concentration | 90.9% | .621 | 91.3% | .592 |
| Three Firm Concentration | 97.6% | .331 | 98.0% | .294 |
| Competition Index | 38.65 | 1.51 | 37.56 | 1.20 |
| Herfindahl-Hirschman Index | 5365 | 77 | 5346 | 73 |
| Total County Circulation | 36,317 | 5302 | 35,629 | 5411 |
| N | 379 | | 378 | |

## Table 4

## Concentration and Competition for Daily Newspapers´ Sunday Markets

| | 1983 | | 1989 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Mean | Standard Error | Mean | Standard Error |
| Number of Dailies in the County | 1.98 | .05 | 1.96 | .04 |
| One Firm Concentration | 77.3% | .933 | 77.2% | .915 |
| Two Firm Concentration | 95.4% | .414 | 95.5% | .402 |
| Three Firm Concentration | 99.2% | .160 | 99.4% | .139 |
| Competition Index | 59.29 | 1.62 | 58.92 | 1.60 |
| Herdindahl-Hirschman Index | 7067 | 111 | 7040 | 109 |
| Total County Circulation | 30,590 | 4,342 | 31,968 | 4,524 |
| N | 492 | | 493 | |

# Table 5

## Concentration and Competition for Daily Newspapers´ Sunday Markets, Excluding One-Newspaper Counties

| | 1983 | | 1989 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Mean | Standard Error | Mean | Standard Error |
| Number of Dailies in the County | 2.54 | .05 | 2.50 | .05 |
| One Firm Concentration | 65.1% | .851 | 64.9% | .798 |
| Two Firm Concentration | 92.9% | .594 | 93.1% | .575 |
| Three Firm Concentration | 98.7% | .244 | 99.0% | .211 |
| Competition Index | 37.21 | 1.39 | 36.90 | 1.30 |
| Herfindahl-Hirschman Index | 5476 | 81 | 5454 | 76 |
| Total County Circulation | 35,337 | 6,356 | 38,545 | 6,657 |
| N | 319 | | 321 | |

# Who's Making the News?
# Changing Demographics of Newspaper Newsrooms

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Presented to the Newspaper Division of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication national convention, Montreal, August 5-8, 1992

# ABSTRACT

## Who's Making the News? Changing Demographics of Newspaper Newsrooms

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The Freedom Forum Media Studies Center
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Presented to the Newspaper Division of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication national convention, Montreal, Aug. 5-8, 1992

A national survey of daily newspaper journalists provides an update of earlier demographic data on who's working in what jobs in U.S. daily newspaper newsrooms. Like the 1971 Johnstone study of newspeople, and Weaver and Wilhoit's 1982-83 replication, *The American Journalist*, this wide-scale survey of 1,328 newspaper journalists indicates trends in the demographics of newsroom personnel – age, gender, race, position, length of service, education. But beyond a simple nose-count of journalistic demographics, this study also provides the first comprehensive examination by race and gender of the roles and responsibilities of newspaper people in the 1990s. The 1990s newspaper newsroom is peopled by more women and minorities than those examined by earlier studies. Newspapering is still a young person's occupation: 42.5 percent of all newspaper journalists of the 1990s are between the ages of 26 and 35, and there is evidence that older journalists – the most experienced personnel in the newsroom – seek other careers after age 40. White journalists are generally older than their minority colleagues, reflective of recent efforts to increase newsroom diversity. As a result, most managers and supervisors are white men. Women and minorities occupy the lower rungs of the newsroom ladder. This study also examines the question of whether minority journalists are more likely than their white co-workers to leave the business. They are not, although journalists of color do seem more prone to "job hop" from one newspaper to another as a means of circumventing glass ceilings on their way up the career ladder.

# Who's Making the News? Changing Demographics of Newspaper Newsrooms

*By Ted Pease*

> *A new generation of newspeople is joining the ranks of older, predominantly white newsmen. As in the larger society, some friction is an inevitable result as new perspectives are added to old.*

Much has been made of the question of America's increasing racial and cultural diversity, and the newspaper industry's response to those changes as the press strives for changes in coverage, content and personnel. The goal of this study is provide a census of newspaper newsrooms to evaluate the impact of expanded minority hiring practices on the demographics and job assignments in U.S. newspaper newsrooms.

Another goal of this study is to explode some misconceptions and to confirm some hunches about journalists of color in newspapers. Among those misconceptions, that minority journalists give up on the business more readily than do their white counterparts (they don't). Among the hunches, that journalists of color aspire to higher management positions than their white co-workers (they do). One look at industry employment figures, and it seems clear that journalists of color must be slipping through the cracks somewhere; ask any newsroom manager – "We just can't keep them." Fact is, minority journalists do leave their newspapers more regularly than white journalists, but not to leave the business. Anxious to move up the career ladder, many journalists of color take advantage of their market value to climb as quickly as they can.

At least twice in the past two decades, scholars have embarked on major national studies in attempts to draw pictures of the "typical" American journalist. Both Johnstone's seminal "news people" study in 1971[1] and Weaver and Wilhoit's update a decade later[2] provided exhaustive profiles of U.S. journalists and their demographic, attitudinal, personal and professional characteristics. Both works acknowledged up-front that journalists – like people – are too diverse to generalize, but then proceeded to do so. Perhaps the best "truth" that either effort revealed was the statement in Johnstone's final report that "journalists come from the established and dominant cultural groups in society."[3] That is – in America, at least – that journalists are white and predominantly male, a conclusion that requires no great inituitive leaps.

Both Johnstone and then Weaver and Wilhoit not only confirmed that "truth" about journalism in America but drew benchmarks against which to measure later news people as well. What neither previous study did, however, was to examine in any great detail the changing demographic character of American news people, and how their increasingly diverse social and ethnic characteristics were changing American newsrooms. In the early 1970s, there were few nonwhite journalists to examine[4] – not surprising that the Johnstone team found that newsrooms reflected the power structure. In the early 1980s, changes had started in the hiring of journalists of color, but they were few.

This study of the American newspaper journalist in the 1990s, like Johnstone's and Weaver and Wilhoit's earlier efforts, draws on a national sample of journalists to examine not only who they are, but what organizational and social pressures shape their professional lives. Neither previous study could evaluate to any great degree the impact of an increasingly diverse American population on the journalistic workforce and product, nor how factors of ethnicity played in newsrooms from Peoria to Pasadena. This study, while not attempting the kind of complete demographic profile of American newspeople that was the core of the two earlier works, has as its goal an understanding of the attitudes of newspaper journalists toward their work and their careers. Further, this study, while comparable in some aspects to the earlier two, seeks more fundamentally to examine and evaluate how the newspaper workplace accommodates a workforce more representative of the diverse society in which newspapers function.

If, as the Johnstone study concluded, news and newspaper content is "ultimately what newsmen make it,"[5] then an understanding of how news and newspapers in America are changing may be gauged by how those "newsmen" have evolved in the 1990s. Many of newspeople of the 1990s are quite different from those of the 1970s and even the 1980s; America's new newspeople are joining the ranks of the older, predominantly white, newsmen, and – as in the larger society – some friction is an inevitable result as new perspectives are added to old.

## *Method*

This study sought not only to update the Institute for Journalism Education's 1985 "Quiet Crisis" study of 329 newspaper journalists,[6] but to expand those benchmark data on minority and white journalists with an eye toward providing a yardstick for individual news organizations interested in assessing the climate for minority employees in their own workplaces. The study also was intended to replicate some portions of both Johnstone's and Weaver and Wilhoit's broader studies of U.S. journalists. As a further guide, this study examined many of the areas covered by a 1982 study of 489 journalists at eight U.S. newspapers by Judee Burgoon, Michael Burgoon and Charles Atkin.[7]

These data come from a national survey[8] of 1,999 randomly selected journalists working for 27 randomly selected daily newspapers, stratified by circulation and geographic region, plus 210 journalists of color selected at random from the membership lists of the four major national minority journalists associations.[9] The study drew a random sample of 30 daily newspapers with circulations of 50,000 and more from the universe of 1,545 daily newspapers then in business in the United States.[10] The sample size of newspapers in each circulation category (500,000 and more; 250,000-499,999; 100,000-249,999; 50,000-99,999) was weighted to reflect each category's percentage of the total newsroom workforce in the overall sample; the respondent newspapers also were selected so as to provide even georgraphic representation (See Table 1 & Figure 1).

A random sample of fulltime newsroom professionals working at each participating newspaper was drawn from the papers' personnel rosters, with the sample size at

**Table 1: Twenty-seven participating newspapers in sample, by circulation category**

**Category I (500,000+) (n = 4)**
- *USA Today* (1,325,507)
- Washington *Post* (772,749)
- *Newsday* (700,174)
- San Francisco *Chronicle* (560,640)

**Category II (250,000-500,000) (n = 5)**
- Houston *Chronicle* (437,481)
- Minneapolis *Star Tribune* (406.292)
- St. Louis *Post-Dispatch* (376,888)
- Portland *Oregonian* (310,446)
- San Jose *Mercury-News* (274,484)

**Category III (100,000-250,000) (n = 9)**
- Seattle *Times* (233,106)
- Pittsburgh *Press* (232,282)
- Memphis *Commercial Appeal* (209,205)
- Arkansas *Gazette* (154,001)
- Akron Beacon Journal (153,550)
- Fort Worth *Star-Telegram* (150,190)
- Riverside *Press-Enterprise* (147,424)
- Nashville *Tennessean* (126,092)
- Omaha *World-Herald* (121,985)

**Category IV (50,000-100,000) (n = 9)**
- Jackson *Clarion-Ledger* (99,830)
- Spokane *Spokesman-Review* (97,128)
- San Bernadino *Sun* (87,012)
- *Arizona Daily Star* (81,689)
- *Oakland Press* (Michigan) (74,028)
- Springfield (Mo.) *News-Leader* (61,900)
- Pensacola *News-Journal* (59,337)
- Fargo *Forum* (54,726)
- Charleston *Gazette* (55,673)

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Figure 1: Participating newspaper representation by geographic quadrant

**Northwest (6)**

- Minneapolis *Star-Tribune*
- Portland *Oregonian*
- Seattle *Times*
- Omaha *World-Herald*
- Spokane *Spokesman-Review*
- Fargo *Forum*

**Northeast (7)**

- *USA Today*
- Washington *Post*
- *Newsday*
- Pittsburgh *Press*
- Akron *Beacon Journal*
- *Oakland Press*
- Charleston *Gazette*

**Southwest (7)**

- San Francisco *Chronicle*
- Houston *Chronicle*
- San Jose *Mercury-News*
- Riverside *Press-Enterprise*
- Fort Worth *Star-Telegram*
- San Bernadino *Sun*
- *Arizona Daily Star*

**Southeast (7)**

- St. Louis *Post-Dispatch*
- Memphis *Commercial-Appeal*
- Arkansas *Gazette*
- Nashville *Tennessean*
- Jackson *Clarion-Ledger*
- Springfield (Mo.) *News-Leader*
- Pensacola *News-Journal*

individual newspapers ranging from 44 at the smallest papers to 150 at the largest; the respondent sample pool was manipulated to reflect the national workforce in daily newspapers by circulation category. In addition, the study purposively oversampled minority journalists at the participating newspapers and conducted a separate mailing to the names of 210 journalists drawn at random from the membership lists of the four major national minority journalist associations. Respondents received a letter explaining the study, a six-page questionnaire and a postage-paid return envelope. The surveying took place in December 1990 and January 1991. The overall response rate was 60.1 percent; 871 (66.1 percent) of respondents were white and 446 (33.9 percent) were people of color.

## *WHO THEY ARE: Characteristics of newspaper journalists in the '90s*

In the early 1980s, the "typical" U.S. journalist was a married white Protestant male, 32 years old and politically middle-of-the-road,[11] but Weaver and Wilhoit acknowledged the limited usefulness of such a description. A similar listing of characteristics might be made of the "average" newspaper journalist participating in this study, but why? Many U.S. newspaper newsrooms have changed radically over the past decade, as women and people of color have joined the white males who still dominate the industry, but many other newsrooms haven't changed much at all. In 1991, 52 percent of all American newspapers still employed no minorities on their news staffs; other newsrooms, however, contain great ethnic diversity.[12] Averaging the characteristics of all newspaper newspeople would yield a generally useless pudding; this study reports in numerical terms who U.S. newspaper journalists are in the context of how the perceptions of the new generation of newspaper journalist may clash with those of the old.

The 1,328 respondents in this study work for a randomly selected sample of daily newspapers ranging in average weekday circulation from 55,000 to well over 1.3 million and employing from 44 to more than 800 newsroom journalists. Scores of other newspapers all over the country are represented through responses to mailings to a random sample from the membership lists of the four major minority journalist associations. Beyond the scientifically random sample of both white and nonwhite respondents drawn from the 27 daily newspapers surveyed, extra efforts were made to augment the number of minorities in the study to get a fuller and deeper understanding of the attitudes of journalists of color in American newsrooms. For this reason, the proportion of minority respondents in this study – about one-third – is considerably higher than in either the newspaper industry or the U.S. population.

Table 2 describes the racial profile of this study's respondents. About two-thirds of respondents are white, 15 percent are black, almost 10 percent Asian American and 8 percent Hispanic or Latino. Fewer than 1 percent of respondents are Native Americans.

**TABLE 2: Survey respondents by race**

| | *White* | *All Nonwhite* | *African American* | *Hispanic/ Latino* | *Asian American* | *Native American* | *Totals* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Number* | 871 | 446 | 197 | 106 | 131 | 12 | 1317 |
| *% of minorities* | -- | 100.0% | 44.2% | 23.8% | 29.4% | 2.7% | |
| *% of total* | 66.1% | 33.9% | 15.0% | 8.0% | 9.9% | 0.9% | 100% |

N=1317; Missing = 11

In all other demographic characteristics, these respondents are reflective of industry averages.[13] Almost 40 percent are women; three are younger than 21 and a handful are over 65, but almost half are in their 30s. A few had just started their newsroom careers and others have been in newspapers three decades or more, but almost 40 percent have 10 to 20 years in the business. Almost 50 percent are reporters, slightly below the national norm.[14]

These results also show that the newsroom population of the 1990s is much more highly educated than in the past. Almost all of respondents – 92 percent – graduated from college, up sharply from earlier industry figures and the findings of the 1970s and 1980s studies.[15] Nearly three of every five college graduates in the current study was a journalism major; 16 percent also completed graduate degrees.

## *Journalists' Age, Gender & Race*

When Weaver and Wilhoit profiled U.S. journalists in 1982-83, women made up barely one-third of the newsroom; fewer than 4 percent were minorities.[16] As Johnstone had pointed out 11 years earlier, those who control society's mass communications tend to share the social power structure's resistance to the assimilation of minorities.[17] Although newsrooms – and certainly publishers' offices and corporate newspaper boardrooms – still tend to reflect the white power structure in the 1990s, some perceptible and measurable changes in both personnel and attitudes now are at work in American newspapers. The proportion of women in the newsroom has risen by about 10 percent in the past decade, and the percentage of minorities in the newsroom has about doubled since 1982.[18] With these demographic shifts come attitudinal changes and pressures on the status quo both in the newsroom and society to approach many things differently.

Not only are more of newspaper staffs in the 1990s women, but they're also still a lot younger than the national average. In 1982-83, Weaver and Wilhoit expressed concern that the proportion of young journalists – ages 25 to 34 – was growing at nearly twice the national average while the number of journalists over 45 was dropping sharply.[19] The concern was that the industry was losing some of its best personnel, who were leaving the profession after about 20 years to pursue more lucrative and less stressful occupations.

As Tables 3, 4 and 5 show, this trend identified in the early '80s continued into the '90s. In 1982-83, almost 45 percent of American journalists were between 25 and 34 years old;[20] today, 42.5 percent of newspaper journalists are 26 to 35. And the sharp drop-off of journalists after their mid-40s found in the earlier study seems to be repeated here; one of every five newspaper journalists in 1991 is in his or her 40s, but just one in 14 is 50-

something. Newspapering has long been known as a young-person's game, for a number of good reasons. "The pay is bad, the hours are lousy and it's very stressful," an Asian American female metro reporter in her early 30s said. "It's good early career for young adults, a fun way to make a living during your adventurous 20s." Apparently many journalists find in their 40s – as a white male desk editor in his early 40s commented on this survey – "It's not for the faint-hearted."

**TABLE 3: Respondent age and race, In percentages**

| | *Whites* | *Minorities* | *All* |
|---|---|---|---|
| *<21* | 0.1% | 0.4% | 0.2% |
| *21-25* | 4.2 | 10.3 | 6.3 |
| *26-30* | 14.0 | 26.3 | 18.2 |
| *31-35* | 23.1 | 26.7 | 24.3 |
| *36-40* | 23.1 | 20.9 | 22.3 |
| *41-49* | 22.9 | 11.5 | 19.0 |
| *50-59* | 9.0 | 3.1 | 7.0 |
| *Over 60* | 3.7 | 0.7 | 2.7 |

N=1304; $X^2$=90.438; d.f.=7; p<.0001

Some patterns emerge from the data in Tables 3, 4 and 5. Whites are older than nonwhites – 69 percent of white journalists are 30 to 50 years old, but almost 74 percent of minorities are younger, between 26 and 40. Women, too, tend to be younger than men (see Table 4). More than 60 percent of all female journalists are 35 or younger, compared to 42 percent of all men. And minority women in the newsroom are younger than the average for all women. Since minorities tend to be younger than whites, and women younger than men, the age gap between minority women and white men is particularly large. Note, for example, in Table 4 that more than 42 percent of white men are 36 to 40 years old and more than half of Asian American women are under 30.

Taken together, the pattern is of a multicultural and female workforce coming up as a white, male workforce ages. Table 4 shows the age spread and patterns by race in the four circulation categories examined in the survey. At all four circulation levels, the age "peak" among white journalists is five to 15 years older than that of minority respondents. Much will change in the next 10 years if these trends continue, and there's no indication they will not.

TABLE 4: Journalists' ages by gender and race, in percentages

| | *All* | | *White* | | *Black* | | *Latino* | | *Asian* | | *Totals* | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Male* | *Female* | *Male* | *Female* | *Male* | *Female* | *Male* | *Female* | *Male* | *Female* | *n* | *%* |
| ***>21*** | 0.3 | -- | -- | -- | 1.0 | -- | -- | 1.0 | -- | -- | 2 | 0.2 |
| ***21-25*** | 4.5 | 8.8 | 14.3 | 7.1 | 11.9 | 8.3 | 5.3 | 13.3 | 11.1 | 14.9 | 82 | 6.3 |
| ***26-30*** | 15.1 | 23.1 | 11.8 | 17.9 | 19.8 | 31.3 | 34.2 | 20.0 | 14.3 | 35.8 | 237 | 18.2 |
| ***31-35*** | 22.2 | 28.0 | 20.8 | 27.7 | 24.8 | 27.1 | 22.4 | 30.0 | 30.2 | 29.9 | 317 | 24.3 |
| ***36-40*** | 22.5 | 22.1 | 42.8 | 22.7 | 22.8 | 22.9 | 17.1 | 30.0 | 27.0 | 11.9 | 291 | 22.3 |
| ***41-49*** | 22.3 | 13.3 | 26.0 | 17.2 | 12.9 | 10.4 | 15.8 | 3.3 | 12.7 | 4.5 | 248 | 19.0 |
| ***50-59*** | 9.5 | 2.9 | 11.6 | 4.1 | 5.0 | -- | 3.9 | 3.3 | 4.8 | 1.5 | 91 | 7.0 |
| ***60+*** | 3.4 | 1.4 | 4.5 | 2.0 | 2.0 | -- | -- | -- | -- | 1.5 | 35 | 2.7 |
| ***Totals*** | *799* | *489* | *558* | *296* | *101* | *96* | *76* | *30* | *63* | *67* | *1288* | |
| ***%*** | *62.0* | *38.0* | *43.3* | *23.0* | *7.8* | *7.5* | *5.9* | *2.3* | *4.9* | *5.2* | | |

N=1,288; Missing observations = 40

Even at the largest American newspapers, where one would assume more experience would be needed to land jobs, the percentage of minority journalists under 30 is two-and-a-half times that of whites On reflection, however, it may not be so surprising that so many young minority journalists already work for larger U.S. dailies. Most of whatever recent progress has been made in the recruitment and hiring of journalists of color in American newspapers has been led by the country's biggest dailies.

Overall, young journalists dominate the business, especially at the smaller papers. One-third of the newsroom staffs in the smallest circulation category – 50,000 to 100,000 – are under 30, compared to 16.5 percent at the papers in the largest circulation category. And when race is taken into account, a wider gap appears; the percentage of minority staffers under age 30 at all circulation levels is about twice that of whites. At 50,000- to 100,000-circulation papers, for instance, half of all minority journalists are 30 or younger, compared to 29 percent of whites; at the 500,000-plus circulation level, 23 percent of minorities are 30 or younger, compared to less than 10 percent of whites.

At the other end of the age scale are white journalists, primarily males. Minority journalists, since they are younger, are more likely to occupy the lower rungs of the newsroom hierarchical ladder, while white journalists – particularly men – are more likely entrenched in more senior positions, a sure formula for frustration and resentment.

## *Newsroom Jobs & Departments*

Table 5 breaks respondents into five newsroom job categories. About half of these journalists are reporters, below the national norm of 57 percent,[21] but the proportions in other job categories are in line with the most recent other industry figures.[22] Within these categories, minorities are more likely to be reporters; whites are more likely to be supervisors and desk editors. The "Other" classification includes graphics, library and systems and miscellaneous other newsroom jobs. About 35 percent of all newsroom staff work in the general news-editorial department, and the proportion of whites and nonwhites here is about even, although the minority proportion in the city/metro department is significantly higher (see Table 6). Whites dominate in the sports and features departments. The "Other" newsroom departments include business and wire desks, special projects and other specialty reporting departments, newsroom systems and library.

**TABLE 5: Newsroom positions by race, in percentages**

| | *Reporter Writer* | *Desk Editor* | *Copy Editor* | *Supervisor Manager* | *Photo* | *Other** | *n* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Whites* | 44.8% | 12.8% | 13.0% | 16.1% | 6.1% | 7.1% | 882 |
| *Minorities* | 53.5 | 9.9 | 14.4 | 10.3 | 6.5 | 5.4 | 445 |
| *Totals* | *633* | *157* | *179* | *188* | *83* | *87* | *1327* |
| | *47.8%* | *11.8%* | *13.5%* | *14.2%* | *6.3%* | *6.6%* | *100%* |

N=1327; $X^2$=14.58199; D.F.= 5; p=.0057; Missing Observations = 1

* Other positions include graphic artist, library, computer systems, etc.

**TABLE 6: Newsroom departments by race, in percentages**

| | *Whites* | *Minorities* | *n* | *%* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *General News-Editorial* | 35.0% | 37.0% | 377 | 35.6% |
| *City/Metro desk* | 12.7 | 22.2 | 167 | 15.8% |
| *State-Region* | 1.4 | 1.2 | 14 | 1.3% |
| *Editorial Page* | 3.1 | 3.5 | 34 | 3.2% |
| *Sports* | 12.7 | 8.7 | 121 | 11.4% |
| *Features* | 14.0 | 6.1 | 121 | 11.4% |
| *Photo* | 7.6 | 8.5 | 83 | 7.8% |
| *Graphics* | 3.9 | 2.9 | 38 | 3.6% |
| *Other** | 11.1 | 11.1 | 117 | 11.1% |
| *Totals* | *715* | *343* | *1058* | |
| | *67.2%* | *32.2%* | | |

N=1058; $X^2$=30.21; d.f.=8; p=.0002; Missing = 270
* Other category includes business, specialty beats, systems, library, etc.

Patterns of who's doing what job ~~a~~in what newsroom department become clearer in Tables 7 and 8, which break down newsroom positions and departments by both race and gender. Table 8 also indicates that women in the newsroom are most likely to be reporters or copy editors, as are minorities. Although these positions are certainly essential to the newspaper's function – the foot soldiers of the daily press – they may also be positions relatively low in prestige, pay and power. More than two-thirds of all newspaperwomen occupy these jobs, compared to 58 percent of all newspapermen. Combining gender and race variables further widens this gap – three-quarters of African American women, 97 percent of Latino women and 78 percent of Asian American women are reporters or copy editors, compared to 57 percent of white men.

**TABLE 7: Newsroom positions by race and gender, in percentages**

| | *All* | | *White* | | *Black* | | *Latino* | | *Asian* | | *Totals* | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Male* | *Female* | *Male* | *Female* | *Male* | *Female* | *Male* | *Female* | *Male* | *Female* | *n* | *%* |
| *Reporter* | 46.1% | 50.6% | 45.7% | 43.1% | 48.5% | 59.4% | 55.3% | 80.0% | 34.9% | 58.2% | 633 | 47.7% |
| *Desk Editor* | 12.8 | 10.0 | 12.3 | 13.0 | 11.9 | 4.2 | 13.2 | -- | 17.5 | 9.0 | 157 | 11.8% |
| *Copy Editor* | 11.9 | 16.5 | 11.3 | 16.4 | 14.9 | 14.6 | 10.5 | 16.7 | 14.3 | 19.4 | 179 | 13.5% |
| *Superviser* | 15.7 | 11.4 | 17.3 | 14.0 | 13.9 | 10.4 | 10.5 | 3.3 | 11.1 | 4.5 | 188 | 14.2% |
| *Photographer* | 7.6 | 4.5 | 6.5 | 5.7 | 8.9 | 1.0 | 3.9 | -- | 19.1 | 6.0 | 83 | 6.3% |
| *Other** | 5.9 | 7.1 | 6.9 | 7.7 | 2.0 | 10.4 | 6.6 | -- | 3.2 | 3.0 | 87 | 65.6% |
| *Totals* | *807* | *492* | *567* | *299* | *101* | *96* | *76* | *30* | *63* | *67* | *1328* | |
| | *60.8%* | *37.1%* | *42.7%* | *22.5%* | *7.6%* | *7.2%* | *5.7%* | *2.3%* | *4.7%* | *5.0%* | | |

N=1327; $X^2$=58.402; d.f.=35; p=0029; Missing = 1
* Other category includes business, specialty beats, systems, library, etc.

TABLE 8: Newsroom departments by race and gender, in percentages

| | *All* | | *White* | | *Black* | | *Latino* | | *Asian* | | *Totals* | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Male* | *Female* | *Male* | *Female* | *Male* | *Female* | *Male* | *Female* | *Male* | *Female* | *n* | *%* |
| *News-editorial* | 34.3% | 38.1% | 33.9% | 37.6% | 28.4% | 37.7% | 41.7% | 45.5% | 37.7% | 37.5% | 77 | 35.6% |
| *City/Metro* | 15.4 | 16.3 | 13.7 | 22.7 | 23.5 | 29.0 | 23.3 | 22.7 | 9.4 | 22.9 | 167 | 15.8% |
| *State-Region* | 1.5 | 1.0 | 1.5 | 1.2 | 1.2 | 1.4 | 1.7 | -- | 1.9 | -- | 14 | 1.3% |
| *Op-Ed* | 3.7 | 2.4 | 3.7 | 1.7 | 4.9 | 4.3 | 3.3 | -- | 1.9 | 4.2 | 34 | 3.2% |
| *Sports* | 15.6 | 3.7 | 16.7 | 4.5 | 14.8 | 1.4 | 1.7 | 4.5 | 11.3 | 2.1 | 121 | 11.4% |
| *Features* | 6.9 | 19.4 | 8.9 | 23.6 | 2.5 | 14.5 | 5.0 | 18.2 | -- | 6.3 | 121 | 11.4% |
| *Photo* | 7.6 | 4.5 | 6.5 | 5.7 | 8.9 | 1.0 | 3.9 | -- | 19.1 | 6.0 | 83 | 6.3% |
| *Graphics* | 3.8 | 2.9 | 3.7 | 4.1 | 3.7 | -- | 3.3 | -- | 5.7 | 2.1 | 38 | 3.6% |
| *Other** | 9.5 | 10.5 | 9.8 | 9.5 | 9.9 | 10.1 | 6.7 | 9.1 | 4.3 | 16.7 | 103 | 9.7% |
| *Totals* | *654* | *381* | *460* | *242* | *81* | *69* | *60* | *22* | *53* | *48* | *1058* | |
| | *63.2%* | *36.8%* | *43.5%* | *22.9%* | *7.7%* | *6.5%* | *5.7%* | *2.1%* | *5.0%* | *4.5%* | *100%* | |

N=1058; Missing = 267
* Other category includes business, specialty beats, systems, library, etc.

ASNE reports that 85 percent of newsroom executives are male; 96 percent are white.[23] This survey confirms this well-established fact, that white men have the supervisory jobs, although there are high proportions of Latino and Asian men as desk editors. As Table 8 indicates, the sports department is male – dominated by both white and black men, there are practically no women. The features department is female, with women – especially white women – outnumbering men three-to-one. A large proportion of minorities and white women work in the metro department, the front-line troops in local and community news coverage and general assignment. Many Asian American men are photographers.

Many of these patterns hold true across circulation levels, although job distributions between whites and nonwhites is fairly even at the largest newspapers. At the smaller papers especially – 50,000 to 100,000 – whites hold the vast majority of desk and supervisory jobs, as they do at the 250,000 to 500,000 level. Sports and features departments as very much dominated by whites across all circulation levels; high percentages of nonwhites continue to occupy rank-and-file reporting positions in the general news and metro departments, especially at larger papers.

## *"Job Hopping" and Newspaper Career Length*

Since white males in the newsroom tend to be older, it comes as no surprise that many of the newcomers to newspaper journalism are people of color. When the Institute for Journalism Education undertook the first comprehensive examination of issues affecting retention of minority journalists in 1984-85, one of the bits of conventional wisdom the study debunked was that minority journalists were "notorious job-hoppers." That "wisdom" had ascribed minority journalists' lack of upward mobility within newspaper organizations to the fact that, as a group, they tended to change jobs more often than whites, and so had less seniority when promotions came around. Minority respondents in IJE's "Quiet Crisis" study, in fact, had worked for fewer newspapers, on average, than had the study's white respondents. An obvious implication was that some other factor was keeping minority journalists from achieving upward mobility in newspaper organizations, if it wasn't their propensity for job-hopping.[24]

This study, replicating part of the "Quiet Crisis" research, confirms that finding, but proffers some additional evaluation. As Table 9 shows, there is no great difference between white journalists and journalists of color in terms of how many times they have "job-hopped." The largest cluster of both white and nonwhite respondents say they have worked for three or four newspapers; in fact, more white respondents have worked for five or more newspapers than have nonwhite respondents. But the fact that 15.2 percent of white men said they had worked for five or more papers undoubtedly could be explained by their age; longevity in the business obviously would translate into job switches.

**TABLE 9: Number of newspapers worked for, in percentages**

| | *Whites* | *Minorities* | *n* | *%* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *This is the first* | 17.0% | 15.6% | 218 | 16.5% |
| *Two* | 26.7 | 26.0 | 350 | 26.5% |
| *Three/Four* | 43.0 | 45.8 | 581 | 43.9% |
| *Five or more* | 13.3 | 12.6 | 173 | 13.1% |
| *Totals* | *879* | *443* | *1322* | *100%* |
| | *66.5%* | *33.5%* | | |

N=1322; $X^2$=1.04; D.F.= 3; p=.7918 (NS); Missing Observations = 6

**TABLE 10: Years' experience in newspapers, in percentages**

| | *Whites* | *Minorities* | *n* | *%* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *<1 yr-5 yrs* | 11.7% | 28.5% | 230 | 17.4% |
| *5-10 yrs* | 22.5 | 32.4 | 342 | 25.8% |
| *10-20 yrs* | 43.2 | 30.6 | 516 | 38.9% |
| *20-30 yrs* | 14.2 | 1.3 | 157 | 11.8% |
| *30 or more* | 8.4 | 1.3 | 80 | 6.0% |
| *Totals* | *880* | *445* | *1325* | *100%* |
| | *66.4%* | *33.6%* | | |

N=1325; $X^2$= 124.06783; D.F.= 4; $p<.0001$; Missing Observations = 3

The sense of the newspaper business as a young person's profession seems to be enhanced by recent efforts to hire more minority journalists. Almost 29 percent of all nonwhite newsroom employees say they've been newspaper journalists for five years or fewer, compared to 11.7 percent of white respondents (see Table 10); 60.9 percent of minority journalists have been on the job for less than 10 years, a timeframe roughly corresponding to the American Society of Newspaper Editors' 1978 adoption of its goal of newsroom "parity" by the year 2000.[25]

More than 63 percent of this study's minority respondents were under 35 years old. Given that white and nonwhite respondents already had worked for about the same number of newspapers, on average (although white journalists tended to be farther along in their careers), it appears that minority journalists may, in fact, "job hop" more than whites. By the time minority journalists' average age and length of service in the industry are comparable to those of whites, nonwhite journalists will have had the opportunity to change newspapers a couple more times. It won't be clear whether this prediction holds true until the nonwhite journalist population has aged.

Journalists of color may change papers more often than whites for a combination of reasons:

1. Younger journalists in general change jobs more often as their personal and professional lives are becoming established; minority newspaper journalists in 1991 tend to be younger than whites.

2. Market conditions, brought on by the slow expansion of the pool of journalists of color, mean that these newsroom professionals are in great demand for a wide range of jobs at a wide range of competing newspapers.

3. Given that demand, minority journalists who look around and above them and don't see immediate opportunities for advancement may be tempted to look elsewhere for greener pastures. Whether this lack of in-house opportunity is structural in newspapers – having an equal impact on all young journalists – or a product of race and the tendency of white managers to promote others most like them, must be explored further.

In any case, a combination of the restlessness of youth, market demand and real or perceived roadblocks to their advancement – along with a greater degree of career ambition – seems to result in a generation of minority journalists more mobile than their white co-workers.

## *The Gender Factor*

Adding the factor of gender to that of race provides further insight into the makeup of today's newspaper newsroom workforce, as well as a sense of what tomorrow's will look like. Men, overall, have been in the business longer than women, as Table 11 shows – more than half of women have fewer than 10 years in the newsroom, compared to about one-third of all men. White men – the oldest gender/race subgroup in the newsroom – are between five and 15 years farther along in their careers than all minority subgroups. For example, 42.6 percent of white men have been on the job between 10 and 20 years, compared to one-third or less of minorities. More than half of all black men in the newsroom have 10 years' experience or fewer, compared to 30 percent of all white men.

That discrepancy is amplified in comparing the careers of white men with those of minority women, whose proportion among all journalists with five years or less is three to four times that of white men. The newest arrivals in newspaper journalism are Asian

American women, three-quarters of whom have worked for newspapers for 10 years or fewer; 40.3 percent have fewer than five years. In fact, more than half of all minority newspaper journalists in the 1990s have been in the business for fewer than 10 years; in contrast, more than 70 percent of white men have been in newspapers for 10 years or more – 11.3 percent since before 1960. White women also have more experience than minorities – 57 percent have 10 years or more on the job.

TABLE 11: Length of employment in the newspaper business, by race and gender, in percentages

| | *All* | | *White* | | *Black* | | *Latino* | | *Asian* | | *Totals* | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Male* | *Female* | *Male* | *Female* | *Male* | *Female* | *Male* | *Female* | *Male* | *Female* | *n* | *%* |
| *<1-5yrs* | 14.3 | 22.6 | 9.2 | 16.1 | 24.0 | 27.1 | 27.6 | 33.3 | 28.6 | 40.3 | 230 | 17.4% |
| *5-10 yrs* | 23.0 | 31.2 | 20.7 | 26.9 | 28.0 | 40.6 | 31.6 | 30.0 | 25.4 | 37.3 | 342 | 25.8% |
| *10-20 yrs* | 39.6 | 37.5 | 42.6 | 45.0 | 33.0 | 29.2 | 28.9 | 33.3 | 36.5 | 17.9 | 516 | 38.9% |
| *20-30 yrs* | 14.7 | 6.9 | 16.3 | 9.7 | 13.0 | 3.1 | 11.8 | -- | 6.3 | 3.0 | 157 | 11.9% |
| *30 or more* | 8.6 | 1.8 | 11.3 | 2.3 | 2.0 | -- | -- | 3.3 | 3.2 | 1.5 | 80 | 6.0% |
| *Totals* | *805* | *491* | *566* | *298* | *100* | *96* | *76* | *30* | *63* | *67* | *1325* | *100%* |
| | *60.8%* | *37.1%* | *42.7%* | *22.5%* | *7.5%* | *7.2%* | *5.7%* | *2.3%* | *4.8%* | *5.1%* | | |

N=1325; $X^2$=234.70297; D.F. = 28; p=.0000; Missing Observations = 3

The same pattern holds in longevity at respondents' current newspapers. Although minority respondents have worked for the same number of papers as their white counterparts, they were by far the newest arrivals where they now work, just as they are relative newcomers to the industry as a whole (see Table 12). Not that young white journalists aren't entering the business, but their proportions are much smaller than the proportions of new minority journalists joining U.S. newsrooms. Overall, most newsroom personnel are relative short-timers – 72.5 percent of all journalists in the newsrooms represented in this sample had been at their current papers for 10 years or fewer; 65.5 percent of minorities but 41 percent of whites had been at their current papers five years or fewer.

**TABLE 12: Length of employment at current newspaper, by race, in percentages**

| | *Whites* | *Minorities* | *n* | *%* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *<1 yr-5 yrs* | 41.1 | 65.5 | 654 | 49.3% |
| *5-10 yrs* | 25.2 | 19.3 | 308 | 23.2% |
| *10-20 yrs* | 20.3 | 12.1 | 233 | 17.6% |
| *20-30 yrs* | 9.9 | 3.1 | 101 | 7.6% |
| *30 or more* | 3.5 | -- | 31 | 2.3% |
| *Totals* | *811* | *446* | *1327* | *100%* |
| | *66.4%* | *33.6%* | | |

N=1327; $X^2$=92528; d.f.=4; p<.0001; Missing=1

Minorities don't, in fact, stay as long at newspapers as their white counterparts, as Table 12 shows, which casts a new dimension on the question of "job hopping." Changing jobs may simply be part of the newspaper culture; nearly half of all these journalists arrived at their current jobs within the last five years ago. The mystique of newspaper journalists holds that they are free-thinkers and risk-takers, cherishing their autonomy and eager to act to satisfy their intellectual curiosity; changing jobs is both a means of indulging wanderlust and a mechanical means of career advancement. For minority journalists, brief stays at newspapers in pursuit of either wanderlust or advancement is even more prevalent than among whites: 84.8 percent of minorities and 66.2 percent of whites have been at their current papers for 10 years or fewer. A further breakdown by race and gender (see Table 13) shows that women generally change papers more often than men; 78.6 percent of all women and 67.2 percent of all men in this sample had been at their current newspapers for 10 years or fewer.

**TABLE 13: Length of employment at current newspaper, by race and gender, in percentages**

| | *All* | | *White* | | *Black* | | *Latino* | | *Asian* | | *Totals* | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Male* | *Female* | *Male* | *Female* | *Male* | *Female* | *Male* | *Female* | *Male* | *Female* | *n* | *%* |
| *<1-5yrs* | 44.9% | 57.1% | 38.3% | 46.5% | 62.4% | 70.8% | 65.8% | 76.7% | 50.8% | 76.1% | 654 | 49.3% |
| *5-10 yrs* | 24.3 | 21.5 | 25.1 | 25.8 | 16.8 | 15.6 | 27.6 | 1.3 | 25.4 | 14.9 | 308 | 23.2% |
| *10-20 yrs* | 17.6 | 3.9 | 19.6 | 21.7 | 15.8 | 12.5 | 3.9 | 6.7 | 19.0 | 6.0 | 233 | 17.6% |
| *20-30 yrs* | 9.7 | 3.9 | 12.0 | 5.0 | 5.0 | 1.0 | 2.6 | 3.3 | 4.8 | 3.0 | 101 | 7.6% |
| *30 or more* | 3.5 | 0.6 | 4.9 | 1.0 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 31 | 2.3% |
| *Totals* | *806* | *492* | *566* | *299* | *101* | *96* | *76* | *30* | *63* | *67* | *1,298* | |
| | *62.1%* | *37.9%* | *43.6%* | *23.0%* | *7.8%* | *7.4%* | *5.9%* | *2.3%* | *4.9%* | *5.2%* | | |

N=1298; $X^2$=174.182; d.f.=28; p<.0001; Missing= 30

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Taking race as well as gender into account, whites generally and white men in particular are least likely to be newsroom short-timers; 38 percent of white male newsroom employees have been at their current newspapers for fewer than five years, compared to an overall average of almost half of all journalists and more than 65 percent of all minority journalists. At the other end of the scale, 70 percent or more of all minority women have been at their current jobs for five years or fewer; among all minority newsroom employees, male Asian Americans are least likely to be short-timers – only half of them have been at their current papers for fewer than five years.

This general characteristic of the minority journalist as newsroom newcomer holds true regardless of circulation size, perhaps another artifact of white entrenchment in the industry combined with the phenomenon of minorities as the newsroom newcomer. At both the largest and the smallest papers in the sample, minorities are more recent arrivals than whites. Indeed, except at the smallest circulation level, minorities are about twice as likely to have been at their current jobs for less than five years.

## *Conclusions*

What emerges from these statistical descriptions of newsroom personnel is the clear picture of older, more experienced whites – particularly white males – who, because of their length of service in the newspaper business, are entrenched in the more prestigious and better paid positions of authority in the newsroom. As a group, white journalists are less likely than minority journalists to change newspapers, which presents a problem for younger newsroom professionals who may covet their jobs. Since minority journalists are much more likely to be young, this results in a pattern of haves and have-nots in newspaper newsrooms that follows race and gender lines.

One finding of these data confirms the pattern identified by Weaver and Wilhoit in the early 1980s that proportionally few journalists - of any race or gender - survive in the business beyond their 40s. This may be encouraging to younger journalists anxious to move up in the hierarchy; the pattern is for journalists in their 40s and older to start thinking about leaving the industry for other endeavors. More than a quarter of all white men in the newspaper business are in their 40s, and another 15 percent are even older. Since so many of those 40-something white males occupy upper-echelon positions of responsibility, there may be job opportunities soon for younger journalists lower in the ranks who can be patient.

On the other hand, this is bad news for the industry as a whole, representing a brain-drain identified a decade ago by Weaver and Wilhoit, who concluded that some of journalism's most experienced, best trained and committed journalists were among those most likely to leave the profession.[26] The data from this study seem to indicate that these valuable commodities remain at risk.

It seems inevitable, however, that the complexion of U.S. newspaper newsrooms will continue to change, although those changes still will lag far behind the demographic shifts of the larger society. The pool of younger reporters and line editors at U.S. newspapers from which candidates for greater newsroom responsibility are selected is increasingly multicultural. The question of the role race and gender play in that selection process must be addressed in other research. Certainly, however, those in positions of authority who make decisions regarding who moves up and who does not still are predominantly white and male, and the human tendency to give preference to people most like yourself likely will continue to be a factor blocking the upward mobility of journalists of color.

What else do these figures show about the changing demographic character of American newspaper newsrooms in the 1990s? Overall, journalism is still a profession for the young - most of those in the newsroom are in their 30s, and those journalists lasting into their 40s increasingly are at risk as they approach 50. For reasons ranging from satisfaction to stress to burnout to salary, after 20 years on the job, newspaper journalists start thinking about doing something else. That means that – as the Boston *Globe*'s Monty Montgomery wrote in a column in 1980 – younger journalists may start visiting their older colleagues more frequently, "taking your pulse and respiration rate to see if you're likely to create a job opening in the near future."[27] These results indicate that there is a good chance of more job openings higher on the ladder in the near future (assuming the size of the newspaper industry's workforce remains constant).

Also implicit in these demographics is the potential for friction between a rising, younger generation of journalists of color and whites in the newsroom, who are mostly older and more entrenched. Although the gross numbers aren't yet there, the proportion of younger journalists among minorities outstrips whites, which means that more will be qualified for those mid- and upper-level newsroom positions when the older whites now occupying them resign or retire.

Discrepancies between men and women and between whites and nonwhites in the newsroom hierarchy undoubtedly will generate resentment, particularly as the younger journalists of color become more seasoned and experienced and collide with glass ceilings. Newspapers interested in keeping their most talented young staffers should consider the data regarding journalists' longevity in their current jobs. On the one hand, ambitious and talented young reporters who leave for opportunities at other papers are not lost to the industry, but that may be small condolence to the papers that lose them and have to start over again in training anew. On the other hand, that cycle ever has been part of the institutional culture of the newspaper business and the nature of newspaper journalists.

## NOTES

1. John W.C. Johnstone, Edward J. Slawski and William W. Bowman, *The News People: A Sociological Portrait of American Journalists and Their Work.* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1976).

2. David H. Weaver and G. Cleveland Wilhoit, *The American Journalist: A Portrait of U.S. News People and Their Work*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986).
3. Johnstone, *et al., op. cit.*, p. 26. See also Weaver and Wilhoit, p. 22.
4. Five percent of the respondents in the Johnstone study were black or Hispanic. See Johnstone, *et al.,ibid.*, pp. 26 and 198. But according to data from the American Society of Newspaper Editors, just 4 percent of the newsroom workforce in 1978 was minority. For comparison with 1982-83, see Weaver and Wilhoit, *ibid.*, p. 23. See also, Clint C. Wilson II and Felix Gutierrez, *Minorities and Media: Diversity and the End of Mass Communications*. (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1985), pp. 159-160.
5. Johnstone, *et al.*, p. 188.
6. Ellis Cose, *The Quiet Crisis: Minority Journalists and Newsroom Opportunity*. (Berkeley, Calif.: Institute for Journalism Education, 1985).
7. Judee K. Burgoon, Michael Burgoon and Charles K. Atkin, *The World of the Working Journalist* (NY: Newspaper Advertising Bureau, 1982).
8. See Ted Pease & J. Frazier Smith, "The Newsroom Barometer: Job satisfaction and the impact of racial diversity At U.S. daily newspapers," *Ohio Journalism Monographs*, No. 1, (Athens, Ohio: E.W. Scripps School of Journalism, 1991). See also Edward C. Pease, "Still the Invisible People: Job Satisfaction of Minority Journalists at U.S. Daily Newspapers," unpublished doctoral dissertation, Ohio University, June 1991.
9. The Asian American Journalists Association; National Association of Black Journalists; National Association of Hispanic Journalists and the Native American Press Association.
10. While these 247 newspapers constitute just 15.5% of all 1,595 U.S. dailies, they represent about 75% of all daily newspaper circulation and employ about 60% of the daily newspaper workforce. Further, all papers larger than 100,000 circulation and 93% of papers with 50,000-100,000 circulation employed journalists of color in 1990-91, while 80% of the 788 U.S. dailies that had all-white newsrooms in 1990-91 were smaller papers of 25,000 circulation or less. Thus, questions concerning race would naturally have greater meaning for newspapers employing journalists of color. See American Society of Newspaper Editors, *1990 Newsroom Employment Survey*. (Reston, VA: American Society of Newspaper Editors, 1991); ASNE Human Resources Committee, *The Changing Face of the Newsroom: A Human Resources Report*. (Reston, Va.: American Society of Newspaper Editors, 1989); American Newspaper Publishers Association, Minority Opportunity Committee, "Industry Employment Survey Report," June 1, 1990.
11. Weaver and Wilhoit, *op. cit.*, p. 12.
12. ASNE, *1990 Newsroom Employment Survey*, op. cit.
13. See *The Changing Face of the Newsroom: A Human Resources Report, op. cit.*, and "Industry Employment Survey Report," *op. cit.*
14. *The Changing Face of the Newsroom*, op. cit., p. 119. The ASNE reported in 1987 that 57 percent of newsroom employees are reporters, writers or editorial page writers.
15. In 1982-83, Weaver and Wilhoit found 50.3 percent of respondents had graduated from college; the Johnstone team found the figure was 39.6 percent in 1971. In 1987, 85 percent of the respondents to ASNE's study were college graduates. Weaver and Wilhoit, *op. cit.*, p. 47; Johnstone, *et al., op. cit.*, p. 200; *Changing Face of the Newsroom*, p. 119.
16. Weaver and Wilhoit, *ibid.*, p. 23.
17. Johnstone, *et al., op. cit.*, p. 26.
18. Weaver and Wilhoit, *op. cit.*, p. 23; see also *Changing Face of the Newsroom, op. cit.*, p. 27, and ANPA employment report, *op. cit.*
19. Weaver and Wilhoit, *ibid.*, pp. 17-23.
20. *Ibid.*

21. *Changing Face of the Newsroom, op. cit.*, p. 119.
22. *Ibid.*; ANPA, *op. cit.*
23. *Changing Face of the Newsroom, ibid.*, p. 17.
24. Ellis Cose, *The Quiet Crisis: Minority Journalists and Newsroom Opportunity.* (Berkeley, Calif.: Institute for Journalism Education, 1985), pp. i, 6.
25. American Society of Newspaper Editors, *Achieving Equality for Minorities in Newsroom Employment: ASNE's goal and what it means.* (Rochester, NY: American Society of Newspaper Editors, 1986).
26. Weaver and Wilhoit, *op. cit.*, p. 99.
27. M.R. Montgomery, "Newsworthy Employment," *Boston Globe Sunday Magazine*, May 20,1980, p. 3.

# Race, Gender and White Male Backlash in Newspaper Newsrooms

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Presented to the Media Management and Economics Division of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication national convention, Montreal, August 5-8, 1992

## ABSTRACT

# Race, Gender and White Male Backlash in Newspaper Newsrooms

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Presented to the Media Management and Economics Division panel, "Human Resource Issues Confronting Media Managers," AEJMC convention, Montreal, Aug. 5-8, 1992

For many journalists of color, the gulf between the good intentions of the Hutchins and Kerner reports and the reality of American newspaper newsrooms in the 1990s – like American society – is wide. For many, faith in good intentions has been drained by experience. At the same time as special initiatives are put into place to recruit and retain minorities and women, however, there is some evidence of a backlash among some white males, who see the rules changing and themselves threatened. Tensions exist on both sides, as those in power seek to retain their position against advances by those seeking entry into what has long been a white men's club.

In an industry where almost 94 percent of top executives are white and 85 percent are men, structural impediments to advancement by women and minorities may seem insurmountable. When race and gender are perceived as more important to advancement than merit, the potential impact on morale, performance and retention of newsroom staffs should be obvious. At the same time, however, there is evidence of a backlash among white men against what some see as "preferential treatment" of minorities and women. "Who cares about white males?" said one city editor for a 90,000-circulation Midwest daily. "No one." In many ways, the struggle within American newsrooms, as elsewhere in the society, may be escalating as women and minorities make slow progress. Substantial changes in the processes and traditions of American newspapers are bound to be resisted and resented by those already in the newsroom who have tithed to the old ways and may be displaced by the new.

Based on the responses of 1,328 respondents to a larger national survey of newspaper newsroom job satisfaction, this paper examines how divisions by race and gender spawn resentment and misunderstanding in the work place. This exploratory study of attitudes resulting from such divisions, coupled with a work place where women and minorities traditionally have been blocked from advancement, suggests that a broad perceptual gap exists by race and gender that adversely affects work place morale and job performance.

# Race, Gender and White Male Backlash in Newspaper Newsrooms

*By Ted Pease*

For many journalists of color, the gulf between the good intentions of the Hutchins and Kerner reports and the reality of American newspaper newsrooms in the 1990s – like American society – is wide. For many, faith in good intentions has been drained by experience. At the same time as special initiatives are put into place to recruit and retain minorities and women, however, there is some evidence of a backlash among some white males, who see the rules changing and themselves threatened. Tensions exist on both sides, as those in power seek to retain their position against advances by those seeking entry into what has long been a white men's club.

In an industry where almost 94 percent of top executives are white[1] and 85 percent are men,[2] structural impediments to advancement by women and minorities may seem insurmountable. When race and gender are perceived as more important to advancement than merit, the potential impact on morale, performance and retention of newsroom staffs should be obvious.

A black business reporter in his 30s, working for a mid-sized Southeastern daily, expressed the frustrations this way: "Until real change comes to the industry, no journalist who enters the field hoping to make a difference will be comfortable with his or her career choice. Until white males truly share power to hire, promote and call the shots, no black or female journalist should expect to do more than fight the good fight as long as they can stand it. And lose."[3]

As this comment suggests, women and minorities find themselves in common cause in the 1990s. Despite expressed good intentions, racism and sexism have resurfaced ferociously in America's society and its institutions, a legacy of the Ronald Reagan era, says author Susan Faludi.[4] And within the institution of newspaper journalism – which author Timothy Crouse called "the slowest-moving, most tradition-bound profession in

America"[5] and which sociologist John Johnstone said has historically been "resistant to the assimilation of minorities"[6] – tensions along racial and gender lines may have increased in recent years.

Journalist and journalism educator Austin Long-Scott described the impact of white resistance to change this way:

> For many of us, being black in the white media made it hard to stay sane, because the cultural assumptions that our view of events depended upon – cultural assumptions that were an integral part of life in black communities all over the nation – were constantly being openly challenged by white editors and reporters who refused to accept our perceptions. They either did not know or refused to look at the facts of black life. And they used their ignorance to construct a belief system that denied our experience because it was not their experience.[7]

In newspaper newsrooms, some minority journalists say, real equality remains a dream, and the promises made by the Kerner Commission in the mid-1960s remain deferred. One black reporter, responding to a 1991 newsroom survey, wrote:

> If fair standards had been applied ... when the Kerner Commission officially alerted the media about its inherent white bias, then many more black journalists would be in positions of power by now, 30 years later. ... White males still clearly dominate at those levels. They gather at meetings such as ASNE and ANPA and verbally flog themselves about how slowly blacks, women and others are penetrating the industry ranks. Then they go back to their newspapers, plug right back into the old boy network, hire and promote their friends, and continue to ignore the equally legitimate viewpoints and potentially valuable contributions that people of color and women can make.[8]

## White backlash

But a backlash may be growing among some white men who see their positions undercut by ASNE and other industry-wide programs, and by corporate directives aimed at increasing newsroom diversity. Some white men see these as unfair "special perks" and programs for women and minorities. "Who cares about white males?" one city editor for a 90,000-circulation Midwest daily commented. "No one."[9] In many ways, the struggle within

American newsrooms, as elsewhere in the society, may be escalating as women and minorities make slow progress. Substantial changes in the processes and traditions of American newspapers are bound to be resisted and resented by those already in the newsroom who have tithed to the old ways and may be displaced by the new.

Despite decades of education about both the moral rightness and the practical benefits to journalists of adopting wider, multicultural ways of looking at the world, few white journalists – who constitute more than 90 percent of all newspaper professionals – really are ready to share decision-making power.

Though not statistically significant, some of the responses of 1,328 newspaper journalists participating in a 1991 job satisfaction study[10] indicate an undercurrent, at least, of resentment toward affirmative action and efforts to bring more minorities and women into key newsroom positions. The battle is for the minds and hearts not of the top executives, who already subscribe to diversity initiatives, but of mid-level white managers who must make them work and who may see themselves as victims of changes in long-established rules.

Few of the 871 white journalists participating in the Barometer study[11], on which this paper is based, actually said they viewed efforts to diversify the newsroom as anti-white discrimination, but some did. How many of their colleagues were these respondents speaking for in taking such a politically incorrect stance? Two-thirds of white respondents did say they thought minorities receive preferential treatment, and one-third said minority journalists get more opportunities than whites[12] – "1,000 times more," a white male city editor wrote. How deep is the white resentment toward the changing face of the newsroom? How many white journalists see their jobs and careers threatened as the rules under which they were hired and trained change to promote women and minorities?

The copy desk supervisor for a 150,000-circulation metro in the Midwest was one of those who expressed what she saw as race-oriented favoritism that unfairly penalizes white journalists. She wrote:

> Although I agree that minorities must be recruited for newsrooms, my paper puts so much emphasis on minority hiring that I advise white males not to apply for openings. In many cases, white males are not even interviewed when they have the necessary journalistic skills. If they were black but had less skill, they would have been interviewed. I support minority opportunity programs, but disagree with their implementation. In reality, the programs deny opportunity to non-minorities. At the present time, my newspaper discriminates on the basis of race and sex. White males need not apply or expect to be treated the same as others in the newsroom.

Such comments are chilling, indicating a depth of resentment among some whites in newspaper newsrooms that will work against diversity efforts at every level. Minority journalists coming into contact with such attitudes will suffer in their relations with co-workers without knowing why; their professional development will be retarded; their copy will be suspect the instant it hits the copy desk; their sources, perceptions of events and objectivity will be questioned. Minority journalists who have been in the business for a time acknowledged such attitudes with a resignation that is nearly as discouraging as the white resentment itself: "There is a deeply held white presumption of minority inferiority that must be rooted out," a black male copy desk supervisor for a major Midwestern metro wrote. "I fear it will take generations."

Walter Lippmann once observed that only the most self-aware and observant person is likely to understand his or her own preconceptions. Racism is baggage that most people don't know they own, created in their psyches before they were conscious of it. He wrote,

> The subtlest and most pervasive of influences are those which create and maintain the repertory of of stereotypes. We are told about the world before we see it. We imagine most things before we experience them. And those preoccupations, unless education has made us acutely aware, govern deeply the whole process of perception.[13]

For newcomers to the newsroom, running headlong into such white resistance may be crippling. Peggy Peterman has been a reporter and columnist for the St. Petersburg *Times* for more than 25 years. When she broke into the business, she and the few other African Americans in the newsroom were "trained to expect racism, obstacles and hostilities," she says; not so the newest generation of minority reporters and copy editors. "My generation's reaction to racism has been simply to dig in, confront, sue and retaliate," she wrote in 1990. "The new generation of young black journalists is bewildered and perplexed. They have been integrated since nursery school and they grew up believing that their skills were all they needed. ... It was all a lie, of course."[14]

A University of Chicago study released in January 1991 found that most whites in America think "blacks and Hispanics are likely to prefer welfare to hard work and tend to be lazier than whites, more prone to violence, less intelligent and less patriotic." The survey of 1,372 respondents from 300 communities across the country showed that "despite progress in race relations since the 1950s, whites' negative images of blacks and other minorities continue to be pervasive." The study concluded that its findings help explain white resistance to affirmative action efforts, "even though they may support equality in theory."[15]

Right-thinking white people both within and outside the newspaper industry can't really believe such racism still exists – how can it? Didn't we root all that out in the '60s? One white reporter in his early 30s, working for a Texas metro, thinks racism is minimal in the newsroom: "News is truly one of the places where minorities are judged on what they do – not on race (except in redneck small towns)," he wrote in response to this study. "News people recognize talent, no matter what race."

But that's the white male perspective. "It's hell out here. Really," a black woman in her late 20s wrote. A reporter for one of the 10 largest dailies in the country, she was voicing some of the bewilderment and pain described by Peggy Peterman. "I look forward to the day when I can come in, do my job and not deal with frequent questions about whether my race will always be an obstacle for advancement. I doubt if that day will ever come in the lifetime of my grandchildren," she wrote in response to this survey.

That's not an uncommon attitude among people of color. In February 1991, National Public Radio broadcast a four-part series on race in America. Asked if she could foresee a time when black Americans won't feel that race is the single most important defining factor about them, Minneapolis *Star-Tribune* reporter Roz Bentley's response was incredulity. She laughed through her answer:

> Hoo boy. Not in my lifetime, not in yours, not in my children's. Ever. No. I don't think so. I mean, when I hear this, it just sounds so silly to me. At this point, it's a nice sentiment, just like it would be nice if we could have all sunny days, but ....[16]

On these questions of race there are few sunny days. Many of the white journalists responding to this study said they thought minorities too often are unqualified for the jobs they're hired to do; they white journalists resent the double standard. "Give them training the rest of us had before we were hired," a white female reporter, 36, wrote. Some white editors wonder if new minority hires can read – one black reporter for a Kentucky paper described how his editor forced him to undergo language tutoring for four months after he was hired, even though he had graduated from college with an English degree.

Peggy Peterman, the 25-year veteran African American journalist from St. Petersburg, says these kinds of attitudes, if pervasive in a newsroom, can cripple young minority journalists. She wrote,

> Because of this stereotype, there's always the rush by editors to put black journalists in some kind of holding pattern or training session, when it is rarely needed. Because of the fear that black journalists may not be professionally prepared to write or speak the English language, some white editors delay giving them story assignments. This is demoralizing to the black journalist, whose bruised self-confidence causes him to question his ability to perform. Broken in spirit, he or she often becomes an object or pity or scorn to young white journalists.[17]

## The Double Bind – "Reverse Discrimination"

Some white reporters say management is "almost too supportive" of minorities – "They are given leeway whites don't receive," one survey respondent wrote. A white male copy editor from Ohio said his company's policy is "multiculturalism over competence." Another wrote, "It's virtually impossible for a black to be fired." And a white male reporter in his late 30s commented, "Let's put it this way: I've never seen a lousy minority reporter fail to make probation, but I've seen plenty of lousy white reporters fail to make it."

L. McLain, in his book *A Foot in Each World*, describes the pervasiveness of issues of race among minorities who have to live in one world and try to survive in the other. Anyone who complains about racism or coverage or perspective in the newsroom is accused of being too sensitive, of being preoccupied with "some black thing," as an education reporter from Michigan wrote. A white female sports reporter from the same paper seemed to confirm her black colleague's perception that efforts to increase racial consciousness in the newsroom are resented. "The most racist person in our newsroom is African American," she wrote. "People are labeled as racist when they're not. You have to watch everything you say, even when it's not racist."

A copy desk supervisor from a Midwestern metro daily in his late 30s has seen this same battle fought at several papers. "Management voices commitment to minorities, but there's not a lot of concrete proof, and white rank-and-file is resentful of even the suggestion," he wrote in response to this study. "Whites see 'sensitivity' on 'diversity' as a code for giving minorities special privileges."

McLain says whites commonly dismiss complaints about race. He wrote:

> Blacks will always have as their primary defense "racism," that generic, omnipresent miasma they alone can feel. And the frustration is compounded by the difficulty of persuading those who do not feel that it even exists. As impossible as it seems to earn the right to sit anywhere on a bus, it will be far more difficult to prove that the person next to you has a sign blocking his mind.[10]

For people of color – both inside newspaper newsrooms and out – race defines both how they perceive and are perceived. "I think society as a whole must change its attitude toward minorities before we can begin talking about newspapers," black female sports writer from Pennsylvania wrote in response to this study. "People in the newspaper industry are products of this society, which concludes that blacks are lazy, less intelligent and not to be trusted. Newspaper coverage of minorities only perpetuate these misconceptions."

The primary gatekeepers of that coverage, of course, are white males, many of whom see themselves as having to pay for efforts to restructure the newsroom. As much as they may support efforts at diversity in the abstract – more than 81 percent of white male respondents in this study said it was essential or very important to add diversity to the newsroom – their response is sharply different in the specific. The big losers in efforts to make newspaper newsrooms conform to society's demographics are white men, many say. "White males were frozen in place because better jobs were given to women and minorities," a white male business reporter in his 40s wrote. "The paper could have had the guts to reward merit without regard to race, gender."

Many white journalists have mixed emotions about newspaper initiatives to increase diversity. Thoughtful, well-meaning and generally supportive white male colleagues find themselves increasingly embittered when they start to sense that diversity programs are costing them job opportunities. It's a double-bind; they support such programs in the abstract, but didn't know they would have to pick up the tab. A white male West Coast reporter in his late 20s expressed these mixed emotions:

> Efforts to diversify the newsroom, while essential and laudable, make life very difficult sometimes for competent white males like me. To me, it's clearly discrimination (not racism) when a person of color with four years less experience than I gets a plum features job I had worked toward for several years. This is also one topic I do not feel free to be honestly critical of at my paper – unusual for this paper. I've recently come to realize that I probably should leave this paper if I want to advance in my career. This is frustrating.

Feeling that resentment, some minority journalists who responded to this study also objected to quota hiring, saying such policies make every minority journalist suspect. "As a minority, I get mad when they hire a minority just to fill a quota," a Latino photographer for a major West Coast metro wrote. "Once the performance proves to be poor, it justifies the resentment whites have toward minorities taking good jobs."

A Latino reporter from Florida agreed. "I am upset by this," he wrote. "I know of too many non-minorities who are denied jobs while I have eased into every one because of my minority status."

And an Asian American Sunday magazine editor for a major West Coast metro daily said she was tired of being made to feel her race and not her talent was behind her hiring. She wrote,

> While I applaud efforts to bring more minorities into the newspaper business, I abhor the way in which they are told that their race was the decisive factor in hiring. I believe this fosters a feeling of having been less qualified for the job in some way and it puts minorities in the awkward position of having no defense when white colleagues accuse them of simply filling a quota. This happened to me and I did not appreciate my supervisor's "frankness" about my hiring. I feel it is more professional to stress a candidate's skills, experience and appropriateness to the task. That way, a candidate can proceed knowing the job was filled on the basis of merit, not on the basis of race. I've worked hard to develop my talent; that I was born Asian is something I cannot take credit for.

## The "Cost" of Newsroom Diversity

Among white journalists, however, suspicion about why minorities are hired and resentment over the "costs" of diversity to their own careers run deep, if the comments of these respondents are typical. Some examples:

- "Managers seem to believe that minorities and women automatically are qualified for jobs, while white males must prove themselves." – White male business reporter, 40s, East Coast, 500,000+
- "As a white male, I sometimes think that if I go job hunting I should look for a company which only looks at ability and is color/sex-blind. It isn't to my economic benefit to go with a company that favors women or minorities." – Desk editor, late 30s, South, 50,000+
- "I am becoming frustrated with what I see as reverse discrimination in this business. I think we have a problem when newspapers look at the color of a person above who can do the job best." – White female metro reporter, early 30s, West, 50,000+

- "In my experience, fear of 'reverse discrimination' causes a lot more uneasiness in newsrooms than the real thing." – White female metro reporter, late 30s, West, 50,000+

- "This survay [sic] is very obviously more coal for the fire that corporate America is racest [sic], which I believe is a bunch of bunk! However the designers of this survey, which I assume are black, can justify its circulation by the affirmative action argument. Now if I was to circulate something similar I would be labeled as a racist and bigot. One more comment: There isn't doubt in my mind that if I was a minority I'd make considerably more money and have companies throughout the land calling me for hire. As it is now, my portfolio and experience is at the top of everyone's list for possible employment – but I haven't had so much as an interview. Tell me that [is] not racism." – White male photographer, 40s, Midwest, 50,000+

- "You don't address the issue of reverse discrimination. In my career, I have been told once directly and several times indirectly that a minority had been promoted ahead of me, though I was better. I feel my advancement – while not stymied – has been slowed unnecessarily by this." – White male business reporter, early 30s, East Coast, 500,000+

- "I was recently told I wasn't a candidate for a job because, 'You're a white male.'" – Feature desk editor, early 30s, Midwest, 50,000+

- "Newspapers have a duty to include all kinds of people in their newsrooms, but the preoccupation with race concerns me. For many white males, it at least seems like you don't count for anything. Why not just hire the most qualified, black or white?" – White male political reporter, late 20s, South, 100,000

- "We reward jobs and promotions in the newsroom to people of inferior talent in order to meet ASNE and company goals of minority representation. We deny jobs to qualified white men because they're white and we need women and minorities to satisfy industry and company quotas." – White male newsroom manager, 50s, Midwest, 100,000+

- "When will people look at me for what I have to give instead of weather [sic] or not I'm a minority? Reverse discrimination is hurting more than helping." – White male photographer, late 30s, Midwest, 50,000+

- "At our paper, I sense a growing trend toward reverse discrimination. Minorities are often promoted before they have the skills to do the job – sometimes over equally or better qualified whites." – White female reporter, early 30s, East Coast, 500,000+

- "This survey started out as a reasonable, honest questionnaire and then turned predictably racial. As a white male, if I'd sent out a simmilar [sic] survay [sic] I'd be viewed as a bigot. When will people look at me for what I have to give instead of weather [sic] or not I'm a minority or not? Reverse discrimination is hurting more than helping." – White male photographer, late 30s, Midwest, 50,000+

- "At our paper, I sense a growing trend toward reverse discrimination. Minorities are often promoted before they have the skills to do the job – sometimes over equally or better qualified whites." – White female reporter, early 30s, East Coast, 500,000+

- "I think there is a serious problem with minorities and women receiving preferential treatment in the newsroom. White males are being passed over or pushed out. It is a frightening atmosphere, almost funny, because we know here that every new position will be filled with a minority or woman because of government perks the paper gets for such a policy. This area has a 1% minority population, yet the percentage of minority employees here is almost 20%. There are still good white males with talent but this company can't see them." – White male sports reporter, late 30s, South, 50,000+

- "For the first years of my career, I didn't think there was discrimination based on race or sex. But then I hit the so-called glass ceiling and my whole perspective changed." – White female reporter, early 30s, West Coast, 250,000+

- "I think the industry is in transition and some of us just got caught. It is right for more minorities and women to be in the newsroom. That means competition is tripled for all jobs. I know a white male who is equal in skills but will never get a job he deserves because of the company's pro-women/minorities focus. Heck, I even took a job he was more qualified for once. It's a bizarre world." – White female feature editor, late 20s, Southeast, 50,000+

- "At entry level, affirmative action is beginning to work in reverse, shutting out qualified whites in favor of borderline minorities." – Latino male reporter, early 20s, Southeast, 50,000

- "Males are being ignored for management positions. Only women have been interviewed while in-house male employees are ignored. Jobs should be open to all employees." – White male sports reporter, late 30s, South, 50,000+

- "I have been the victim of racial discrimination because I am white. Others, in the past, with less ability and lesser qualifications were promoted above me because they were minorities. I strongly disagree with such a practice. Intent is irrelevant. The fact is this constitutes discrimination." – White male reporter, early 30s, West Coast, 100,000+

- "I understand the desire for more ethnic diversity in newsrooms, but it's being done at the expense, in some cases, of better-qualified employees. Skill seems to mean little. ... I was eliminated from a job candidacy simply

> because I am a white man. Reverse discrimination is not the solution to past discrimination." – Feature desk editor, early 30s, Midwest, 50,000+

## Discussion

From these responses, it is no surprise that comments from minority journalists in assessing the state of diversity in American newspaper journalism should contain some anger over the racism and resentment they encounter in the newsroom. The assessments of most newspaper journalists – both white and minority – contain a tough recognition of the barriers remaining and a sober determination that diversity efforts will ultimately succeed, although there is some disagreement over whether they will. As a black metro desk editor from Chicago wrote, "Racism is a challenge, not a death sentence."

"I honestly believe that American journalism has made some progress toward racial and sexual diversity since the urban unrest of the late 1960s," a Latino metro reporter from the Bay Area wrote. "As a whole, however, the profession has a long, long way to go before it mirrors our diverse and changing society."

Many thoughtful white journalists seem to have taken the first steps toward the kind of awareness that will be required if minority hiring in newspapers will ever evolve beyond inventory into improved coverage and understanding. The very first step, says one Midwestern copy editor in his 50s, is recognizing the limits of your own perceptions. "Our management attempts to relate to minority concerns. But all have had fairly sheltered backgrounds and don't identify well with those concerns," he wrote. "It is difficult for an organization dominated by white males in a conservative middle American community to identify with minority cultures.

"Of course," he added, "they are part of a minority culture worldwide, but they have yet to perceive that."

Some minority journalists can point to progress in their own newsrooms. An African American city editor for one of the nation's largest dailies says it's taken years, but she feels valued and valuable in the newsroom. "Right now, I'm happier than I've ever been in the business," she wrote. "My bosses value my judgment and I feel I have presence and influence in the newsroom. I have authority and get along well with peers and subordinates. I feel encouraged to stay in the business."

A white male photographer for a West Coast paper pointed to his own newsroom as evidence that attitudes are changing and structural obstacles are lessening; everyone in his newsroom, he says, makes his or her own way. "At [this paper], we have every race, nationality you can think of, straight people and gay people," he said. "Each person's personal constitution determines their ability to succeed. If you're not a little tough or if you are a quitter, whose fault is that?"

An African American sports desk manager for a major East Coast paper and an Asian American reporter for a mid-size West Coast daily said that's all they want, a chance to take their best shot at succeeding. All she wants, the Asian reporter said, is to be left alone to do her job. "I think it's important to remember that minorities are not looking for an easy ride in this field," she wrote. "I've never expected special treatment from management. I do expect equal consideration in any decision made concerning my career. That's all."

Among many respondents to this survey there was a sense that industry efforts for diversity are lip service. A black reporter in his early 20s, in his second year at an Eastern metro, said newspapers support diversity because it's politically correct, not because they really believe it. "Most papers still aren't convinced that they need minority staff and superiors to be competitive and survive," he wrote. "It's time for newspapers to practice what they preach, to walk like they talk. The hypocrisy is nauseating and infuriating."

Other minority journalists say their discouragement with the distance yet to travel toward equality in the newsroom is amplified because they, like their white counterparts, started their newspaper careers as young idealists with high hopes for changing the world, doing good and righting wrongs. "Minority journalists confront the same problems that minorities everywhere confront," one black reporter for a major East Coast daily wrote.

"Unfortunately, that is harder for us to deal with because most of us chose journalism as a career that would help right wrongs. When we enter the profession and see that we help contribute to society's problem, we're quick to become disillusioned."

Contributing to the problem is a theme of the comments of other minority journalists, some of whom have a sense of having sold out. "I wouldn't work for the South African government," a black male desk editor wrote. "But sometimes when I see what we put in the paper, how we portray people of color in our pages, I wonder if I haven't just traded my culture for a couple of pieces of silver."

The black editorial page editor for a mid-sized Western daily agreed: "Much of the racism in this country is fed by stereotypes perpetuated in the news media," she wrote. "This industry ought to be in the forefront of the movement to value diversity...."

## Conclusion

The tensions throughout American newspaper newsrooms over issues of race and ethnicity, clearly run in every possible direction. All journalists would prefer to be able to do their jobs without dealing with race questions, but along with whatever benefits may derive from being "color-blind" in assignments and coverage come the pitfalls of denying reality. As Austin Long-Scott reminded the journalism educators, the white-dominated news media in this country were for generations color-blind, but that meant blind and deaf to any cultures but their own. For white journalists, especially those who tend the media's news gates, the addition of new perspectives to the newsroom and the news coverage mix makes them uncomfortable. That's normal, Long-Scott says:

> The cultures in which they were trained, the cultures they have learned to be comfortable in, both empower their news judgments and limit them. ... All of us are both supported by and prisoners of the cultures we know, the cultures in which we are comfortable, the cultures we believe in. We run all our critical decisions, the personal and the professional ... through cultural filters before we act on them. What is a cultural filter? It is a way of using your ignorance to deny my experience because it is not your experience.[19]

Many white journalists are supportive of efforts to expand their experience and that of newspaper readers, but don't know how to go about it.

"I'm not sure any of us knows how to support people who aren't exactly like we are," a white female feature writer for an East Coast paper wrote. "Newsrooms are not exactly the Phil Donahue Show."

Although these responses are not empirically conclusive – those journalists who voiced the strongest resentment about "reverse discrimination" against white men in the newsroom were but a tiny fraction of the respondents to this study – they are indicators that newsrooms suffer the same kinds of deep divisions along racial and gender lines that split society. Are most white male journalists resentful of efforts to increase diversity and to promote women and minorities? Certainly not, but some are.

What seems to underlie many of the comments by the 1,328 journalists who took part in this study is a sense of separation and mistrust. As the industry institutes changes to reflect the larger society more accurately, tensions grow among those who see those changes as threats to their jobs and positions. As newcomers enter the profession and hear grumbling that their employment, assignment or promotion might be linked to their race or gender, they have to wonder about the level of confidence their co-workers have in them. More than 70 percent of minority journalists think their white colleagues doubt their ability to perform their jobs adequately: "Managers see minorities and think, 'remedial,'" a black reporter from Michigan said.[20] Thus, whether it is true or not, the perceptual reality for many minority journalists is that they are resented and mistrusted in the newsroom, with obvious insidious effects on the work place environment. "Most managers feel trapped into hiring minority candidates, and such a mindframe nurtures doubt about ability," an East Coast photo editor wrote. "Whether or not it has any validity is a moot point."[21]

If a wide perceptual gulf exists between whites and minorities, between men and women, about issues of opportunity, ability and advancement in the work place, as these data and those in the larger study seem to indicate, what kinds of manifestations result in terms of job satisfaction and performance? How prevalent are feelings among white male journalists that they are victims of reverse discrimination? What is the impact of such undercurrents on work relationships between supervisors and staff, and among co-workers, and how do these factors affect the "creative tension" that makes the newsroom function? These results, byproducts of the larger study[22] of job satisfaction and race in newspaper newsrooms, though inconclusive, indicate that this is an area for further study into the backlash among white journalists to diversity efforts, and into the impact of those efforts on work place practices and relationships.

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## Notes

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2. American Society of Newspaper Editors, *The Changing Face of the Newsroom: A Human Resources Report*. (Reston, VA: ASNE, 1989). p. 17.
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6. See John W.C. Johnstone, Edward J. Slawski and William W. Bowman, *The News People: A Sociological Portrait of American Journalists and Their Work*. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1976), p. 26; and David H. Weaver and G. Cleveland Wilhoit, *The American Journalist: A Portrait of U.S. News People and Their Work*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), pp. 22-23.
7. Austin Long-Scott, address to plenary session, "Meeting the Multicultural Challenge of the 1990s," Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication national convention, Minneapolis, August 12, 1990.
8. Quoted in Pease, *op. cit.*, p. 358.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 359.
10. The Newsroom Barometer Project was a national survey that collected responses of 1,328 newsroom professionals, from publishers to entry-level reporters, on questions of job satisfaction and race in U.S. daily newspaper Newsrooms. For a full description of the project methodology and results, see "Still the Invisible People," *op. cit.*, or Ted Pease and J. Frazier Smith, "The Newsroom Barometer: Job satisfaction and the impact of racial diversity at U.S. daily newspapers," *Ohio Journalism Monographs*, No. 1, July 1991.
11. Statements of journalists in this paper, unless otherwise noted, come from "Still the Invisible People," *op. cit.*
12. "Still the Invisible People," *op. cit.*, pp. 259, 268.

13. Walter Lippmann in Peter D. Bathory,*Leadership for America*. (New York: Longman, 1978).
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15. Lynne Duke, "Whites' Racial Stereotypes Persist," The *Washington Post*, January 9, 1991, pp. A1, A4.
16. John Madson, "Race Relations," National Public Radio four-part series broadcast Jan. 31-Feb. 4, 1991.
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18. L. McLain, *A Foot in Each World*. (Evanston, Ill: Northwestern University Press, 1986).
19. Long-Scott, *op. cit.*
20. "Still the Invisible People," *op. cit.*, pp. 285-309.
21. *Ibid*. p. 422.
22. "Still the Invisible People," *op. cit.*

# Race and the Politics of Promotion in Newspaper Newsrooms

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# ABSTRACT

## Race and the Politics of Promotion in Newspaper Newsrooms

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It's one thing to hire people of color to help "balance" the newsroom, but once minority journalists are on-board as reporters and editors, the culture of the newsroom tends to exclude and isolate them. Responses by 1,328 newspaper journalists to a national survey shows that the newspaper industry's efforts to correct the lack of newsroom and news content diversity may have been something less than a complete success. As the old rules change, those entrenched in the newsroom exhibit increasing resistance to the new, multicultural order. At least, that's how it appears to the newcomers. Minorities and women in U.S. daily newspaper newsrooms say glass ceilings sharply limit their professional opportunities, but white men don't think the ceiling exists. Whites do think that minorities get preferential treatment in hiring, assignments and promotions, but minority journalists say that whatever extra benefit minorities may get in hiring evaporates once they are in the newsroom. And how important is it, really, to hire staffers of different ethnic and racial backgrounds? Essential, say 74 percent of minorities, but only 49 percent of white journalists. Once on-board, is there equal opportunity in training and assignments? No, everyone agrees. More than 53 percent of white journalists say minorities get just as many opportunities to succeed as anyone else, but 65 percent of minorities say minority journalists have fewer opportunities than whites. About 30 percent of whites say minority journalists get more opportunities to succeed than do whites. Almost 69 percent of minorities say young minority journalists are hired to fill quotas, and then abandoned. The bottom line: Sharply differing perspectives by race about opportunities and advancement in newspaper newsrooms.

# *Race and the Politics of Promotion in Newspaper Newsrooms*

*By Ted Pease*

> *"We have a dismal record of hiring OK minority reporters and not giving them extra support to help them succeed in a pool of good to very good reporters. . . It's sink-or-swim."*
>
> – White male metro desk editor, 40s
> Midwestern 250,000 daily

As an industry, newspapers have a tendency to go for the quick fix. By definition, newspapers are reactive, responding to events around them with reports, analyses, opinion and interpretation. There is much that is admirable in this trait; given a problem, newspaper people respond, look for a solution, fix the problem and move on.

In many ways, this has been the industry's pattern in addressing questions of race. In 1947, the Hutchins Commission told the pres it had a problem in terms of the press's execution of its social responsibility, even suggesting a five-point checklist on how to fix it: Broader coverage of all constituent groups in society; context in reportage that gives the news meaning; a broader platform for opinion that would permit more people to stand up and speak, and so on.[1] In 1968, the Kerner Commission told the newspaper industry it had another, not-unrelated problem and also told newspapers how to fix it: Cover all communities, not just white ones; hire more nonwhite reporters and let them help decide what's news; train more minorities for newspaper careers, etc.[2]

In both cases, the newspaper industry responded with well-publicized concern over its shortcomings and rededicated efforts to fix them. In the late '40s and '50s, newspapers embraced the precepts of social responsibility journalism; in the late '60s and '70s, they tried to find more nonwhites for the newsroom mix. But once the declarations were drawn, the programs, initiatives, and task forces in place, newspapers assumed the problems were fixed and went back to their primary task of reacting to events and reporting them. Daily journalism is a strenuous undertaking, and the job is never done. In many newsrooms, as the saying goes, reporters and editors are so busy fighting alligators that they forget they were going to drain the swamp.

One of the most conspicuous and well-meaning newspaper industry declarations regarding issues of race was the American Society of Newspaper Editors' goal, espoused in 1978, of achieving newsroom "parity" by the year 2000. By the turn of the century, the editors said, demographics in newspaper newsrooms should reflect those of society. The philosophical intent of the "parity" goal was good, but there was little real structure or mechanism in place – and, in many newsrooms, little real enthusiasm – to implement the policy. Certainly, media voices reflecting all the diversity of the American ethnic and cultural melting pot are essential in a representative democracy; simply hiring more persons of color in the newsroom has been seen as a straightforward means of accomplishing that in a task-oriented industry.

But what about newspaper content and coverage? Missing in that neat solution, was a real commitment within the newspaper industry to address the core criticisms of both the Hutchins and Kerner reports. Both brought the press to task for its attitudinal and philosophical shortcomings – for excluding ideas that differ from those of the majority and the mainstream, for failing to provide the larger society with a full picture of life for all Americans. Part of the problem certainly was who was doing the reporting and the gatekeeping; recruiting different kinds of people to work for newspapers was and is an obvious means of expanding some of the newsroom perspective. Hiring programs were for the newspaper industry a quick fix, but like many such solutions, they haven't done much to change problems behind the root criticisms of the press.

"What's missing has been an understanding of the larger aim, the question of the relationship between the news product and the consuming audience," one critic wrote in 1990. "The leap of faith has been that increasing newsroom numbers somehow would magically equate to a product more relevant to the diverse audiences in the market."[3]

Carolyn Martindale, writing in the newsletter of the Task Force on Minorities in the Newspaper Business in 1988, further exposed the quick fix's conceptual shortcoming:

> By some mysterious alchemy, the whole task of providing better coverage of minority issues seems to have become tied to the effort to bring more minority individuals into journalism. The idea seems to be that if we can just get more minority reporters into our newsrooms, they will make sure that we provide more accurate and representative coverage of minorities in society.[4]

Part of the assumption is that simply hiring more nonwhite personnel for the newsroom would somehow change the newspaper industry's philosophy, institutional mindset, social agenda and performance. What's been missing in the quick fix, obviously, is a commitment generally by newspapers to change fundamentally the way they look at and cover the society. Many of those new, nonwhite journalists added to American newsrooms over the past decade to help newspapers "fix" this "problem" often were tucked in a corner and conveniently forgotten. Not surprisingly, there has been a reluctance in the industry and in individual newspaper companies to share power, so the addition of people of different races and ethnicities to do the same jobs white people had been doing didn't go far to correct the deeper structural and attitudinal shortcomings.

Slowly, that has changed. Over time, the numbers of minority journalists have increased, and some people of color have started slowly up the ladder toward positions of power, the positions where their different perspectives on society might actually influence the newspaper institution. Newspaper performance has improved; more of the people who are representative of America now cover America, and there is more diversity on news desks and at daily news meetings helping decide what's news and how to cover it.

With these gains, however, has come resistance in many newsrooms among white journalists, for whom the comfortable old rules are changing. Instead of being "grateful" to be there, journalists of color assert themselves as full partners in creation of the news product, with the same kinds of legitimate expectations and ambitions as their white co-workers. As a result, issues of race in the newsroom – in coverage, in assignments, promotion and advancement, in power-sharing – are out of the closet, creating friction between the new diverse character of the American press and the way it's always been done.

## Method

This study of how race and newsroom politics affect newspaper advancement was part of a larger national survey concerning job satisfaction at U.S. daily newspapers.[5] The study surveyed 1,999 randomly selected journalists working for 27 randomly selected daily newspapers, stratified by circulation and geographic region, plus 210 journalists of color selected at random from the membership lists of the four major national minority journalists associations.[6] The sample newspapers' circulation sizes ranged from 54,000 to more than 1.3 million, and were distributed evenly across the country by geographical location (see Figures 1 and 2). A random sample of fulltime newsroom professionals working at each participating newspaper was drawn from the papers' personnel rosters; respondent sample sizes at individual newspapers ranging from 44 at the smallest papers to 150 at the largest. The respondent sample pool also was manipulated to reflect the national work force in daily newspapers by circulation category. Each selected respondent received a letter explaining the study, a six-page questionnaire and a postage-paid return envelope. The surveying took place in December 1990 and January 1991. Of the 2,209 journalists surveyed, 1,328 responded, for a response rate of 60.1 percent; 871 (66.1 percent) respondents were white and 446 (33.9 percent) were people of color; 829 (62.4 percent) of the respondents were men, 499 (37.6 percent) were women.

## Results

Based on the responses of the 1,328 journalists who participated in the survey, this paper examines attitudes toward issues of race in personnel matters, news coverage and other areas of the newsroom. There is resentment on all sides of this issue; some wish everyone would just stop talking about diversity and get on with fighting those alligators; some wish

**Figure 1: Twenty-seven participating newspapers in sample, by circulation category**

**Category I (500,000+) (n = 4)**
- *USA Today* (1,325,507)
- Washington *Post* (772,749)
- *Newsday* (700,174)
- San Francisco *Chronicle* (560,640)

**Category II (250,000-500,000) (n = 5)**
- Houston *Chronicle* (437,481)
- Minneapolis *Star Tribune* (406.292)
- St. Louis *Post-Dispatch* (376,888)
- Portland *Oregonian* (310,446)
- San Jose *Mercury-News* (274,484)

**Category III (100,000-250,000) (n = 9)**
- Seattle *Times* (233,106)
- Pittsburgh *Press* (232,282)
- Memphis *Commercial Appeal* (209,205)
- Arkansas *Gazette* (154,001)
- Akron Beacon Journal (153,550)
- Fort Worth *Star-Telegram* (150,190)
- Riverside *Press-Enterprise* (147,424)
- Nashville *Tennessean* (126,092)
- Omaha *World-Herald* (121,985)

**Category IV (50,000-100,000) (n = 9)**
- Jackson *Clarion-Ledger* (99,830)
- Spokane *Spokesman-Review* (97,128)
- San Bernadino *Sun* (87,012)
- *Arizona Daily Star* (81,689)
- *Oakland Press* (Michigan) (74,028)
- Springfield (Mo.) *News-Leader* (61,900)
- Pensacola *News-Journal* (59,337)
- Fargo *Forum* (54,726)
- Charleston *Gazette* (55,673)

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Figure 2: Participating newspaper representation by geographic quadrant

Northwest (6)
Minneapolis *Star-Tribune*
Portland *Oregonian*
Seattle *Times*
Omaha *World-Herald*
Spokane *Spokesman-Review*
Fargo *Forum*

Northeast (7)
*USA Today*
Washington *Post*
*Newsday*
Pittsburgh *Press*
Akron *Beacon Journal*
*Oakland Press*
Charleston *Gazette*

Southwest (7)
San Francisco *Chronicle*
Houston *Chronicle*
San Jose *Mercury-News*
Riverside *Press-Enterprise*
Fort Worth *Star-Telegram*
San Bernadino *Sun*
*Arizona Daily Star*

Southeast (7)
St. Louis *Post-Dispatch*
Memphis *Commercial-Appeal*
Arkansas *Gazette*
Nashville *Tennessean*
Jackson *Clarion-Ledger*
Springfield (Mo.) *News-Leader*
Pensacola *News-Journal*

we would stop just talking about race and get something done to change the monocultural approach of most news organizations. Some nonwhite journalists see themselves limited because of their race; some white journalists see themselves on the defensive because of their race. Both white and nonwhite journalists see themselves passed over for jobs and promotions because of their race; both men and women see themselves limited because of their gender.

If nothing else, what the responses of these journalists underscore is that there is no quick fix in matters of race. Resentments are deep and expectations are great on both sides. Hiring policies to increase the proportions of journalists of color in the industry represented a vital first step; it's past time for a meaningful second step.

## *The Politics of Promotion*

The term "glass ceiling" is used as an image to describe the perceptions of lower-echelon personnel in an organization who feel themselves excluded from advancement. They can see where they want to go, the positions to which they aspire, but they feel themselves blocked from attaining them by a structural barrier that permits them to rise only so high, but no higher. Such employees are left with their noses pressed to the glass ceiling, on the outside looking in, able to see what they desire, but unable to reach it.

In newspapers, the glass ceiling is an effective barrier to the ambitions of women and minorities, who – as we've seen – often aspire to positions at the very upper echelons of newspaper management. In 1990, 39 percent of all newsroom employees but only 28 percent of all news-editorial managers and executives were women, according to the American Newspaper Publishers Association. Of those top-level women managers, only 1 percent were nonwhite; minorities accounted for 5 percent of all newsroom managers and executives.[7]

Besides its obvious direct impact on career advancement, another effect of the glass ceiling is its deadening of the aspirations of those gazing up through it. People who look around and above them and see few or no others like themselves in higher positions are likely to think those higher jobs are unattainable. The result may be self-limiting; some newsroom personnel may limit their own career goals because they think some positions are beyond them, not for reasons of ability, but of race, gender and other factors unrelated to job performance. Part of the impact of the glass ceiling is that employees limit their own ambitions because no one like them has ever had the job they want and they may think it beyond their grasp. The career aspirations of women, especially minority women, may be lower than those of men not because they are less qualified or less capable or even less ambitious than men, but because the newsroom culture limits them. The glass ceiling serves both to block and to demoralize.

**TABLE 1: Existence of the "glass ceiling" in newspapers, by race, in percentages**

*Q. Do you think a "glass ceiling" barring minorities and women from upper management positions exists at your newspaper?*

| | *Whites* | *Minorities* | *All* |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Yes* | 35.1% | 69.5% | 46.6% |
| *No* | 64.9 | 30.5 | 53.4 |

N=1314; $X^2$=137.569; d.f.= 1; p<.0001; Missing = 14

Table 1 illustrates perceptions of differences by race within the structural and institutional limitations at American newspapers. From respondents' comments, it's obvious who thinks the glass ceiling exists and who doesn't. The question asked, "Do you think a 'glass ceiling' barring minorities and women from upper management positions exists at your newspaper?" A white reporter in his early 30s working for a Midwestern metro, answered, "Don't know. There are too few minorities to tell if it exists." A white female section editor with more than 30 years' experience wryly explained what her management's response might be: "Ceiling? We have a token black and a token woman. There."

A white male reporter for a 50,000-plus daily said, "Our ceiling isn't glass; it's brick!" But a white woman desk editor for a leading East Coast paper said she sees it differently: "It's not glass; it's a pile of white guys in ties overhead!"

As Table 1 shows, the race gap on this question is wide – more than two-thirds of minorities say there's a glass ceiling at their newspapers; two-thirds of whites say there isn't. Most instructive in describing the ceiling are the responses to this question broken down by both race and gender in Table 2. There is some disagreement among women about who is most affected by the glass ceiling at their newspapers. At one major Southern California metro, the ceiling is "for minorities only," an Asian American staffer said. A black woman copy editor at a large daily on the opposite coast agreed: "For women, no; for minority women, yes!" A black woman business reporter in Ohio said there are ways through the ceiling at her paper, "but you have to be of a certain mold, mainly passive and nonthreatening."

**TABLE 2: Importance of hiring newsroom staff of different ethnic backgrounds, by race and gender, in percentages**

***Q. How important do you think it is for your newspaper to hire people of different ethnic backgrounds in the newsroom?***

| | *All* | | *White* | | *Black* | | *Latino* | | *Asian* | | *All* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Male* | *Female* | *Male* | *Female* | *Male* | *Female* | *Male* | *Female* | *Male* | *Female* | |
| *Essential* | 54.2 | 62.3 | 48.3 | 52.2 | 79.2 | 81.1 | 68.4 | 80.0 | 60.3 | 76.1 | 57.9 |
| *Very Important* | 27.4 | 23.7 | 13.8 | 10.4 | 16.7 | 19.4 | 14.8 | 24.6 | 18.2 | 11.8 | 26.5 |
| *Somewhat Important* | 14.2 | 11.1 | 17.7 | 12.4 | 5.9 | 9.5 | 6.6 | 3.3 | 7.9 | 11.9 | 13.1 |
| *Not Important* | 2.7 | 2.2 | 3.0 | 3.0 | 1.0 | 2.1 | 1.3 | -- | -- | -- | 2.5 |

N=1324; $X^2$=97.345; d.f.=24; $p<.0001$; Missing = 4

From the copy desk of a Pacific Northwestern daily, an Asian American male said he didn't think there was any "concerted effort" to bar people from top ranks. "It's only that they want people who fit in with the gang, and that gang is mostly white men," he said. It's the "fitting in" question that equates to what a black male metro editor called "extreme favoritism" in the politics of promotion. A Native American local news editor said the selection process is confounding – some nonwhites get past the barrier, he said, but why are some of those decisions made? "Those minorities who are promoted are not the best minorities qualified," he wrote. "So how do I answer?" An Asian American woman in her late 20s, writing from an East Coast metro daily, said it depends on who you know, not what you know: "Those who advance do so on a political basis, just as politically favored Caucasian reporters do," she said.

Other respondents say the barrier applies only at the top levels, and "the ceiling is getting higher," wrote a woman bureau reporter in her early 30s. A black, East Coast city editor agreed. "I think the very top management – publisher, editor, executive editor, etc. – is still largely closed," she said. "We can generally be department heads or assistant managing editors, but beyond that it's difficult to advance." The white female section editor for another major East Cost metro says the rules are clear at her paper: "Racial minorities are given preference in hiring, but the glass ceiling keeps almost all minorities and women from upper-level editorships," she said.

Besides the race gap in attitudes of American journalists toward the glass ceiling, there is a distinct gender gap, as Table 2 shows. Men and women overall are split in about the same proportions whites and minorities – two-thirds of men say there's no glass ceiling at their papers and two-thirds of women say there is. Three-quarters of white men also think there are no structural obstacles barring minorities and women from upper management positions at their newspapers; Hispanic and Asian American men also are less likely than women in those ethnic subgroups to perceive a glass ceiling. Note that although about twice as many white women as white men think there's a glass ceiling at work in their newsrooms, only about half of the white female journalists answered "yes" to this question. There is no gender gap among black journalists, however; about three-quarters of both black men and black women say the glass ceiling exists.

It may be that the glass ceiling become more tangible to journalists at larger papers; both whites and nonwhites were more likely to say it exists at larger papers than at smaller papers (see Table 3). About 35 percent of all white journalists say there's a glass ceiling at work at their newspapers (see Table 1), but they are more likely to acknowledge it at larger papers. Minority journalists at papers larger than 100-000 daily circulation are most aware of the glass ceiling.

**TABLE 3: Existence of the "glass ceiling" in newspapers, by race and circulation, in percentages**

***Q. Do you think a "glass ceiling" barring minorities and women from upper management positions exists at your newspaper?***

| | *500,000+* | | *250,000-500,000* | | *100,000-250,000* | | *50,000-100,000* | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Whites** | **Minorities** | **Whites** | **Minorities** | **Whites** | **Minorities** | **Whites** | **Minorities** | ***All*** |
| ***Yes*** | 44.2% | 76.1% | 44.7% | 57.8% | 26.6% | 77.8% | 28.0% | 65.9% | 46.6% |
| ***No*** | 55.8 | 23.9 | 55.3 | 42.2 | 73.4 | 22.2 | 72.0 | 34.1 | 53.4% |

N=1314; $X^2$=181.982; d.f.=7; p=.0001; Missing = 14

*Preference in Hiring, Not in Advancement*

Just as white and nonwhite journalists disagree sharply on the existence of structural barriers to advancement that work against minorities, so do they disagree about whether minorities get an extra break when they apply for jobs, as shown in Table 4. Do minority applicants for newsroom jobs get preferential treatment? "Yes, and they should!" commented a white reporter in her late 30s, a remark echoed by many respondents of all races. "I do everything I can to see that minority applicants are at the top of the applicant pool," wrote a black female assistant metro editor from the Southwest.

**TABLE 4: Journalists' perceptions of preferential treatment of minority applicants, by race, in percentages**

***Q. Do you think minority applicants for newsroom jobs at your paper receive preferential treatment?***

| | ***Whites*** | ***Minorities*** | ***All*** |
|---|---|---|---|
| ***Yes*** | 67.0 | 37.2 | 57.0 |
| ***No*** | 33.0 | 62.8 | 43.0 |

N=1304; $X^2$=103.887; d.f.=1; p<.0001; Missing = 24

Overall, however, whites and nonwhites have entirely different perceptions of the influence of race in newsroom hiring and promotions – two-thirds of white journalists think minorities receive preferential treatment, while about the same percentage of minority journalists say they don't – "But I think others perceive we do," wrote a black woman reporter from Ohio.

One answer may lie in where and when the "preferential treatment" is applied. As a black woman from California wrote, the extra help comes "only in initial hiring, not in advancement." An Asian male copy editor agreed: "When they think they have to hire a minority, yes," he said. "Otherwise, no way." As white male reporter in his late 50s said, whatever preference minorities get is "only for the lowest-paying jobs in each department." It is a common sentiment.

Minorities are "easily hired, but rarely promoted," a white male desk editor from the West Coast wrote. "They can succeed as a writer, editor, etc., at a lower level, but aren't given that chance at higher echelons. The same applies to women."

A black female business reporter for one of the country's largest dailies, now with more than 12 years in newspapers, thinks newspapers follow industry mandates to hire more minorities, but once those new staffers are on board, it's business as usual. "They get special treatment to beef up minority numbers. But once they're here, it's another story," she said. A white woman reporter in her early 30s agreed. "While the hiring process for entry-level jobs works against whites, the situation then flip-flops," she said. "Minorities – and women! – are far less likely to be promoted."

Others – both white and nonwhite – commented on the industry's "hypocrisy" in its "periodic rhetoric on the importance of diversity," as one black desk editor in his 50s wrote. A reporter from a mid-sized Eastern daily also criticized race-based hiring. "I find it hypocritical that we suddenly discover there are 'qualified' blacks, etc.," he said. "All but one of a dozen or so summer interns were minorities. Does that mean there aren't any qualified white kids?"

Not surprisingly, as Table 5 indicates, whites – especially women – are most likely to think that minority applicants for newsroom jobs receive preferential treatment. Blacks overall don't see it, perhaps because they see minority staffers abandoned and passed over once they're in the door. As newspaper circulation increases, the percentage of whites who think minorities receive preferential treatment increases by almost 50 percent from the lowest to the highest circulation category, while the proportion of minorities who think nonwhite applicants are preferred declines.

**TABLE 5: Journalists' perceptions of preferential treatment of minority applicants, by race and gender, in percentages**

*Q. Do you think minority applicants for newsroom jobs at your paper receive preferential treatment?*

| | *All* | | *White* | | *Black* | | *Latino* | | *Asian* | | *All* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Male* | *Female* | *Male* | *Female* | *Male* | *Female* | *Male* | *Female* | *Male* | *Female* | |
| *Yes* | 54.6% | 56.5% | 64.8% | 70.5% | 22.0% | 25.5% | 43.8% | 36.7% | 46.8% | 57.6% | 57.0% |
| *No* | 45.4 | 43.5 | 35.2 | 29.5 | 78.0 | 74.5 | 56.2 | 63.3 | 53.2 | 42.4 | 43.0% |

N=1277; $X^2$=137.689; d.f.=7; p<.0001; Missing =51

At the entry level, minorities may have an edge because of race, but race seems to be a negative once the minority staffer is on-board. "They are sought-after to fill job vacancies," an Asian American Sunday magazine editor wrote. "But they are then left to their own devices." It is not surprising that young minority journalists at those papers, many of whom had perhaps found themselves popular at industry job fairs, might agree that they had received some preferential treatment when they applied for jobs. Older nonwhite journalists, many of whom have worked their way into larger papers, however, may have learned from experience that whatever benefit they derived from their race at entry levels evaporated when they began to seek higher positions.

The perceptual distance between whites and nonwhites in the newsroom on questions of the impact and importance of ethnicity lead inevitably to bitterness. Speaking from experience, a Native American editor with more than 10 years on the job said there are limits to the "benefits" minorities receive for their ethnicity. Do minorities receive preferential treatment? "In terms of being hired and fired, yes. In terms of being treated as human beings, no," he wrote.

### *Valuing Ethnicity*

Despite these tensions, however, there seems to be little disagreement about the value of diversity in newspapers, at least in principle. Overall, whites and nonwhites agree on the importance of having different kinds of people on staff; 81 percent of whites and 91 percent of minorities think it's essential or very important for their newspapers to hire people of different ethnic backgrounds in the newsroom. Not surprisingly, nonwhite journalists are adamant on this question: 75 percent think ethnicity is essential in the newsroom, but so do half of white respondents.

**TABLE 6: Importance of hiring newsroom staff of different ethnic backgrounds, by race and gender, in percentages**

*Q. How important do you think it is for your newspaper to hire people of different ethnic backgrounds in the newsroom?*

| | *All* | | *White* | | *Black* | | *Latino* | | *Asian* | | *All* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Male* | *Female* | *Male* | *Female* | *Male* | *Female* | *Male* | *Female* | *Male* | *Female* | |
| *Essential* | 54.2% | 62.3% | 48.3% | 52.2% | 79.2% | 81.1% | 68.4% | 80.0% | 60.3% | 76.1% | 57.9% |
| *Very Important* | 27.4 | 23.7 | 13.8 | 10.4 | 16.7 | 19.4 | 14.8 | 24.6 | 18.2 | 11.8 | 26.5 |
| *Somewhat Important* | 14.2 | 11.1 | 17.7 | 12.4 | 5.9 | 9.5 | 6.6 | 3.3 | 7.9 | 11.9 | 13.1 |
| *Not Important* | 2.7 | 2.2 | 3.0 | 3.0 | 1.0 | 2.1 | 1.3 | -- | -- | -- | 2.5 |
| **Composite Responses** | | | | | | | | | | | |
| *Essential/Very Important* | 82.9 | 86.5 | 79.3 | 84.6 | 93.1 | 88.5 | 92.1 | 96.7 | 87.3 | 89.0 | 84.4 |
| *Somewhat/Not Important* | 17.1 | 13.4 | 20.7 | 15.4 | 6.9 | 11.6 | 7.9 | 3.3 | 12.7 | 11.9 | 15.6 |

N=1324; $X^2$=97.345; d.f.=24; p<.0001; Missing = 4

There is little overt philosophical dispute about the desirability of different views and perspectives, but white journalists, for whom the question necessarily is more intellectual than personal, see ethnicity as less important than do minorities; the range on this question ran from 79 percent of white men to 96.7 percent of Latina Latino women, who said diversity in the newsroom was essential or very important.

One must wonder, parenthetically, what the 3 percent of white men and women were thinking who said diversity in the newsroom was not important. Some of these respondents come from communities with very low nonwhite populations, and some work for papers with no minorities in the newsroom. For these people, perhaps, terms such as "diversity" and "multiculturalism" represent threatening issues with which other people in other communities must deal, but which are distant from them and their way of life. Or perhaps they feel that there is no need in their predominantly white communities for different perspectives. This is not an uncommon viewpoint, after all, in an industry in which half of all newspapers employ no minorities in their newsrooms.[8] The white male publisher of a small Ohio daily once said that although he was all for industry efforts to "give minorities a chance," he didn't think he had to worry about trying to hire any nonwhite journalists for his newsroom, since his circulation area was so predominantly white.[9] Perhaps this publisher and the 26 survey respondents who think it unimportant to hire minority journalists don't publish any news about events outside their predominantly white communities. One-third of white respondents working for papers of 50,000 to 100,000 circulation considered newsroom diversity somewhat important or not important (see Table 7). In fact, 18 of those 26 white journalists who said the issue was unimportant work for these newspapers. Interestingly, even minority journalists at this circulation level are less interested in this topic; about 20 percent said ethnicity is somewhat or not important.

**TABLE 7: Importance of hiring newsroom staff of different ethnic backgrounds, by race and circulation, in percentages**

***Q. How important do you think it is for your newspaper to hire people of different ethnic backgrounds in the newsroom?***

| | *500,000+* | | *250,000-500,000* | | *100,000-250,000* | | *50,000-100,000* | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Whites* | *Minorities* | *Whites* | *Minorities* | *Whites* | *Minorities* | *Whites* | *Minorities* | *All* |
| *Essential* | 59.2% | 78.9% | 59.0% | 79.2% | 47.2% | 72.6% | 34.1% | 58.7% | 57.9% |
| *Very Important* | 24.2 | 12.4 | 28.7 | 12.9 | 38.5 | 20.0 | 33.6 | 21.7 | 26.5 |
| *Somewhat Important* | 15.3 | 6.8 | 10.7 | 6.9 | 13.5 | 5.9 | 24.3 | 17.4 | 13.1 |
| *Not Important* | 1.3 | 1.9 | 1.6 | 1.0 | 0.8 | 1.5 | 8.0 | 2.2 | 2.5 |
| **Composite responses** | | | | | | | | | |
| *Essential/V. Important* | 83.4 | 91.3 | 87.7 | 92.1 | 85.7 | 92.6 | 67.7 | 80.4 | 84.4 |
| *Some/Not Important* | 16.6 | 8.7 | 12.3 | 7.9 | 14.3 | 7.4 | 32.3 | 19.6 | 15.6 |

N=1324; $X^2$=166.101; d.f.=24; p<.0001; Missing = 4

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### *Opportunity, "Status" Beats & Training*

But once they're on board, many minority journalists find their progress up the career ladder blocked by institutional and other barriers that prevent them from showing what they can do and gaining the experience any journalist needs to advance.

Among other things, the problem – again – is one of perception. White journalists say minorities get as much chance as they do to succeed, or more. But more than two-thirds of minority journalists think their opportunities are less than those of whites in the newsroom.

The next three tables cover respondents' perceptions of how much opportunity to succeed minority journalists have compared to that of their white counterparts and indicate a sharp perceptual gulf between whites and nonwhites in the newsroom. The question asked simply, "Do you think minority journalists are given as much opportunity as white journalists to succeed, less opportunity or more opportunity?"

**TABLE 8: Journalists' assessments of minority journalists' opportunity to succeed, by race, in percentages**

***Q. Do you think minority journalists are given as much opportunity as white journalists to succeed, less opportunity, or more opportunity?***

| | *Whites* | *Minorities* | *All* |
|---|---|---|---|
| *As much as whites* | 53.5% | 27.3% | 44.7% |
| *Less than whites* | 16.6 | 65.1 | 33.0 |
| *More than whites* | 29.9 | 7.6 | 22.4 |

N=1292; $X^2$=315.37; d.f.=2; p<.0001; Missing = 36

As Table 8 shows, whites perceive much more equity in the newsroom than do minority journalists. Further, a sizable percentage – about 30 percent – say minorities get more opportunities than whites to succeed, a possible indication of a growing backlash among some whites in the newsroom against efforts to increase diversity. Half of whites journalists say everyone gets about the same chance to succeed, but almost two-thirds of minority respondents say their perception is that minorities lack equal opportunity. As a

Latino male desk editor said, "Minorities now have great opportunities to get into the business, but face barriers and stereotypes for promotions to the highest levels."

Table 9, which breaks down responses by both race and gender, offers additional insight into this disagreement of perceptions between white and minority journalists. These data underscore the depth of the disagreement on race lines. More than half of all Asians and Latinos think minorities generally do not get the same opportunities as whites in the newsroom; about 80 percent of black journalists think they have less opportunity to succeed. About one-third of Hispanic and Asian journalists think their opportunities for success are about equal to those of whites.

**TABLE 9: Journalists' assessments of minority journalists' opportunity to succeed, by race and gender, in percentages**

***Q. Do you think minority journalists are given as much opportunity as white journalists to succeed, less opportunity, or more opportunity?***

| | *All* | | *White* | | *Black* | | *Latino* | | *Asian* | | *All* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Male* | *Female* | *Male* | *Female* | *Male* | *Female* | *Male* | *Female* | *Male* | *Female* | |
| *As much as whites* | 45.7% | 42.8% | 53.4% | 53.3% | 22.2% | 18.5% | 32.0% | 41.4% | 31.7% | 30.8% | 44.7% |
| *Less than whites* | 30.2 | 37.1 | 15.2 | 18.9 | 77.8 | 80.4 | 56.0 | 55.2 | 55.6 | 49.2 | 33.0 |
| *More than whites* | 24.1 | 20.8 | 31.4 | 27.8 | -- | 1.1 | 12.0 | 3.4 | 12.7 | 20.0 | 22.4 |

N=1292; $X^2$=349.719; d.f.=16; p<.0001; Missing =36

Attitudes of both white and nonwhite journalists on this question change as circulation rises, however; almost half of all journalists working for the smallest papers in the sample think minorities have as much opportunity to succeed as whites (see Table 10). At the largest papers in the sample, however, fewer than one-quarter of minority journalists but well over half of white journalists think minorities have as many opportunities to succeed as whites. Almost 30 percent of whites at the larger papers think minorities get more opportunities; 41 percent of minority journalists at smaller papers think they have less opportunity for success than whites, a number that climbs to 68 percent at the largest papers.

This may be an indication, again, that experience prompts minority journalists to reassess their expectations as their careers progress.

**TABLE 10: Journalists' assessments of minority journalists' opportunity to succeed, by race and circulation, in percentages**

*Q. Do you think minority journalists are given as much opportunity as white journalists to succeed, less opportunity, or more opportunity?*

| | *500,000+* | | *250,000-500,000* | | *100,000-250,000* | | *50,000-100,000* | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Whites* | *Minorities* | *Whites* | *Minorities* | *Whites* | *Minorities* | *Whites* | *Minorities* | *All* |
| *As much as whites* | 54.0 | 23.6 | 53.4 | 28.1 | 57.0 | 23.7 | 49.3 | 47.8 | 44.7 |
| *Less than whites* | 17.3 | 68.2 | 23.5 | 67.7 | 10.0 | 68.1 | 16.0 | 41.3 | 33.0 |
| *More than whites* | 28.7 | 8.3 | 23.1 | 4.2 | 32.9 | 8.1 | 34.7 | 10.9 | 22.4 |

N=1292; $X^2$=347.342; d.f.=16; p<.0001; Missing = 36

In reference to the showing of some 30 percent of white journalists who say minority journalists get more opportunity to succeed than whites, note the responses at the two smaller circulation categories. More than one-third of the white journalists at those newspapers say minorities have more opportunities than whites. In the open-ended responses, some white respondents voiced some resentment about reverse discrimination. That will bear some scrutiny.

Many minority respondents said they had the sense of having been brought into the newsroom to fill management hiring objectives without being given the assignments for which they thought themselves capable. More than 68 percent of minorities in U.S. newspaper newsrooms said they thought it was a common practice for newspapers to hire personnel without providing the training and guidance to help them improve; 42 percent of white journalists agreed (see Table 11).

"Like many papers, we've given priority to hiring minorities, but have done little to help them once on-board," a white male feature writer said.

The white metro editor at a major Midwestern daily agreed: "We have a dismal record of hiring OK minority reporters and not giving them extra support to help them succeed in a pool of good to very good reporters," he said. "There is no organized support effort, and little thought given to the problem. It's sink-or-swim."

**TABLE 11: Journalists' assessment of training, development opportunities, by race, in percentages**

***Q. At some newspapers, journalists sometimes are hired to fill a quota but then not brought along or given the training/opportunities to help them improve. Do you think that has happened at your newspaper?***

| | *Whites* | *Minorities* | *All* |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Yes* | 42.2 | 68.7 | 51.3 |
| *No* | 57.6 | 31.3 | 48.7 |

N=1285; $X^2$=79.112; d.f.=1; $p<.0001$; Missing = 43

There's also a gender gap in responses to this question, as Table 12 indicates, with women overall more likely to say training opportunities have not been available for young journalists, another indicator of the compounding effect of both race and gender in limiting newsroom opportunity. Most white journalists, overall, do not think training opportunities have been lacking in their newsrooms. Between 70 percent and 80 percent of minority women say training activities for recent employees have been lacking; about 60 percent of minority men agree (see Table 12).

**TABLE 12: Journalists' assessment of training, development opportunities, by race and gender, in percentages**

***Q. At some newspapers, journalists sometimes are hired to fill a quota but then not brought along or given the training/opportunities to help them improve. Do you think that has happened at your newspaper?***

| | *All* | | *White* | | *Black* | | *Latino* | | *Asian* | | *All* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Males* | *Females* | *Males* | *Females* | *Males* | *Females* | *Males* | *Females* | *Males* | *Females* | |
| *Yes* | 46.7 | 58.1 | 40.2 | 46.0 | 60.8 | 74.7 | 63.5 | 70.0 | 61.7 | 81.8 | 51.3 |
| *No* | 53.3 | 41.9 | 59.8 | 54.0 | 39.2 | 25.3 | 36.5 | 30.0 | 38.3 | 18.2 | 48.9 |

N=1285; $X^2$=91.787; d.f.=7; $p<.0001$; Missing = 43

**TABLE 13: Journalists' assessment of training, development opportunities, by race and circulation, in percentages**

*Q. At some newspapers, journalists sometimes are hired to fill a quota but then not brought along or given the training/opportunities to help them improve. Do you think that has happened at your newspaper?*

| | *500,000+* | | *250,000-500,000* | | *100,000-250,000* | | *50,000-100,000* | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Whites* | *Minorities* | *Whites* | *Minorities* | *Whites* | *Minorities* | *Whites* | *Minorities* | *All* |
| *Yes* | 51.4 | 72.9 | 49.0 | 71.1 | 40.2 | 66.7 | 31.8 | 56.5 | 51.2 |
| *No* | 48.6 | 27.1 | 51.0 | 28.9 | 59.8 | 33.3 | 68.2 | 43.5 | 48.7 |

N=1285; $X^2$=103.936; d.f.=7; p<.0001; Missing = 43

As Table 13 shows, the sense of abandonment of all journalists seems to increase with circulation. At the smallest papers, more than half of minority journalists and about one-third of white journalists think their papers lack adequate training opportunities for young staffers; those proportions rise to 73 percent and more than 50 percent, respectively, among journalists at the largest papers. At all circulation levels, minority journalists are about 20 percent to 25 percent more likely than whites to see new recruits thrown into the newsroom without adequate development opportunities.

Those most likely to be lack training opportunities are new minority journalists, white and minority journalists agree. About half of whites and two-thirds of nonwhites think new minority hires often lack adequate on-the-job training opportunities. "It's sink or swim here," a white male in his 40s wrote. "There's no training in any formal sense. It's up to individuals to seek out help, mentors and bring themselves along."

One Asian reporter spoke for many when she said she didn't want any "extras." She said, "I think I was hired to fill a quota, but I also believe I have equal talent to anyone else hired. I don't need management to babysit me. I can work on my own to improve." But a senior white male reporter from a 250,000-circulation Midwestern metro said race is not a factor. "Aw, c'mon," he wrote. "It happens, but it's balanced by instances when it does not occur. The availability of training for reporters is always a problem, regardless of the reporter's race.

"This question is dumb," he added. "To assume, as does this question, that every minority journalist should be brought along, promoted, etc., is to exempt them from what should be the ultimate test: Can they cut it?"

Minority journalists are three times more likely than whites (35.4 percent to 10.6 percent) and women are less than twice as likely as men (26 percent to 14.6 percent) to say they personally have felt themselves denied adequate training opportunities in the newsroom.

## Conclusion

The conclusion to be drawn from all this might be that all journalists are chronic complainers and such carping should be ignored. But the depth, breadth and length of these comments should rather be an indication of the depths of dissatisfaction present quite close to the surface in so many U.S. newspaper newsrooms. Newspaper newsrooms have been described as microcosms of the larger U.S. society. Dominated as they are by white men, that has not necessarily been an accurate picture in the past, but they slowly may be evolving to more closely resemble the society. Friction between the old guard and the new – between the way it's always been done and recent new directions and initiatives, between a traditional white male perspective and those of a more diverse work force of minorities and women – is not limited to newspaper newsrooms. Those tensions and frustrations, ambitions and aspirations discussed so eloquently by respondents in this section also exist in the larger society.

It seems apparent from these results that there is a broad perceptual gulf in most U.S. newspaper newsrooms, between what newspaper management thinks it is attempting in recruiting and hiring journalists of color, and how those new recruits (and their veteran white colleagues) view the workplace situation in which they land. The newspaper industry has sought to hire a more multicultural work force for two reasons, philosophical and practical. Philosophically, newspaper managers understand that the all-white club that exists in the newsroom is wrong; from a pragmatic perspective, they know that a broader editorial perspective may help their newspapers reach more of the increasingly multicultural audience that is America. Even given these good intellectual reasons for newspapers to work for diversity, however, there are many shortfalls in the execution of such policies. Glass ceilings, hiring practices that exclude women and minorities, informal *mano-a-mano* "instruction" that prepares staffers for the internal political arena, *sub-rosa* expressions of resentment by white colleagues toward minority colleagues, discrepancies in professional development opportunities and intangible differences in opportunities for assignments all contribute to the gulf that many minority journalists perceive and many white journalists can't see in the newsroom of the 1990s.

## Notes

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6. The four major national minority journalist groups are the Asian American Journalists Association, the National Association of Black Journalists, the National Association of Hispanic Journalists, and the Native American Press Association.
7. American Newspaper Publishers Association, "Industry Employment Survey Report," June 1, 1990. See also American Society of Newspaper Editors, *The Changing Face of the Newsroom*. (Reston, VA: American Society of Newspaper Editors, 1987).
8. The 1990 American Society of Newspaper Editors' Minorities Committee report shows the percentage of newsroom staffs at U.S. daily newspapers stands at 8.72 percent, while 52 percent of all daily newspapers still employ no minorities in the newsroom. April 1991.
9. Personal communication, G. Kenner Bush, publisher, The Athens (Ohio) *Messenger*, July 24, 1990.

# Future of Daily Newspapers:

## A Q-Study of Indiana Newspeople and Subscribers

by

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Future shock is upon the newspaper industry.

What the future holds for newspapers is anybody's guess. In one corner stand the doomsayers, forecasting imminent demise. In the other corner, optimists blindly assure themselves--and anyone who will listen--that people will always want newspapers.

Meanwhile, newspapers are waging a daily battle among their readership and their advertisers to maintain an eroding foothold in a mass media marketplace that is teeming with quicker, more focused, and more aggressive competition.

> Some analysts say that the current downturn is part of an ongoing cycle for the newspaper industry. Others say that the daily paper's days are numbered. But industry officials agree that newspapers are now caught in a difficult situation. They must find ways to sell a single product to an increasingly diverse, increasingly distracted audience.[1]

Certainly, newspapers have not shied away from the challenge, and many individual newspapers, and newspaper organizations have conducted or commissioned research studies to find answers to the challenges which they face. And virtually everyone involved with the industry has voiced an opinion about the solutions necessary to solve industry problems.

*Los Angeles Times* "Innovation" columnist Michael Schrage, for example, suggests that newspapers should provide an opportunity for readers to feel a part of the larger community which surrounds them:

> So the real issue here is less "packaging the news" than creating these [larger] communities. That's why tomorrow's newspapers have to be fundamentally different from today's. Editors and publishers need to explore ways to build newer and tighter relationships with their readers and advertisers. Instead of relying on editorial rhinoplasties and promotional gimcracks, successful newspapers will use emerging technologies to redefine their roles as the vital community medium.[2]

On the east coast, *New York Times* "Press" columnist Alex S. Jones suggests newspapers are heading in a different direction:

> The newspaper industry is suffering through the worst advertising climate in decades and is rapidly embracing the concept that the hometown daily's future prosperity depends on evolving into sophisticated marketing organizations capable of reaching smaller and smaller target audiences, as advertisers increasingly demand.[3]

Even academics have proposed some strategies. Robert L. Stevenson, professor at the University of North Carolina, advises the newspaper industry to tailor its product for the educated, because there is a strong correlation between education and readership. Newspaper attempts to create better news packages have not increased readership. "Apparently, the slick graphics, color maps, and dummied-down content didn't help," Stevenson said. "The best that can be said is that they may have acted as a slight brake on the decline of readership."[4]

Researching various target audiences has been the focus for a number of years of various groups including the American Society of Newspaper Editors which recently commissioned a survey of readers labelled as either "at risk" or "potential" readers. William Ketter, chairman of the ASNE readership research committee said:

> The future of daily newspapers as a mass medium may depend on our ability to capture [at risk and potential] readers who don't feel a strong commitment to the kinds of newspapers we are now producing.[5]

Another approach to the target audience strategy has involved the use of newspaper prototypes, which is an aggressive strategy by newspapers to test a finished product with its readers. In Santa Ana, California, *The Register* created a prototype for "at risk" readers focus groups which liked the prototype by a 6-1 margin. "Potential" readers liked the prototype by a 3-1 margin.[6]

In Sacramento, the metro section staff of the *Bee* designed a prototype for "potential" readers which was favorably received. The *Lexington* (Ky.) *Herald-Leader* created a prototype for its women's section to reach "at risk" readers. The *Wisconsin State Journal* in Madison created a new feature section aimed at all its "potential" readers from the very young--5 to 9-- to their parents.

At the *Boca Raton* (Fla.) *News* , editors redesigned the paper to reattract aging baby boomers to its readership. Their efforts to listen to their readers resulted in a 19 percent increase in daily and Sunday readership, which led Knight-Ridder executive Lou Heldman to remark: "The first step for newspapers will be getting a better understanding of their audiences."[7]

Throughout all the debate and research that has been conducted, one thing seems certain. There is still much disagreement in the print industry about what needs to be done. The shot-gun approach to research which has earmarked the last decade concerning this problem has left the industry with bits and pieces of the target but has not provided a clear shot to a macro solution. Rather than look at various reader demographic groups, or survey news editor or news manager views on the subject, this study attempts to assess the perceptions of both editors and subscribers responding to the same set of stimuli to ascertain if there in fact exists any consensus between the two groups about the future of the newspaper business.

## PREVIOUS RESEARCH

Although thousands upon thousands of column inches in professional periodicals have been devoted to conjecture about the future of newspapers, scientific research dealing with the subject is not as bountiful. The most obvious reason for this is that the future, by definition, is difficult to study.

Burgoon, Bernstein, Burgoon, and Atkin surveyed and interviewed over 1,500 journalists in two studies representing over 80 newspapers and seven television stations in an attempt to analyze journalists' perceptions of the future of the newspaper industry. The first study found respondents generally optimistic about the present image of newspapers, but apprehensive about the future--particularly regarding newspapers' ability to hold readers. Results of the second study deviated slightly from the first in that these journalists were rather ambivalent about whether their news organizations had favorable images in their respective communities. Respondents were also divided with regard to the future of newspapers, 34 percent saying it is gloomy, while 38 percent remained optimistic.[8]

Popovich and Reed in a recent study had 56 Indiana journalists respond to a Q-Sort concerning their perceptions of the future of the newspaper industry. The authors found five attitude patterns existed among the journalists, but overall Indiana journalists were optimistic about the future of the business. Small-town journalists, who experienced little pressure from outside media sources, felt that stronger local news coverage would neutralize future television competition. Big-city journalists believed that the key to their futures resided in their ability to aggressively market their product and to learn more about their readers' wants and needs.[9]

In another Atkin, Burgoon, and Burgoon project, journalists were surveyed to determine how they perceived the reading audience, and the researchers' findings indicated journalists generally underestimate their readers. Respondents' estimates of the proportion of the public reading the paper, the amount of time spent reading, and interest level in hard news content all tended to be lower than reality. Journalists regarded readers as rather unsophisticated, dissatisfied with the paper overall, and easily influenced. The findings showed print journalists overrate the public's use of television news.[10]

Much of the mass communications research dealing with areas that might well influence the fate of the newspaper industry concentrates on readership, the impact of graphics and design as tools for attracting and keeping readers, and the economic forces affecting the industry.

In a national probability sampling of nearly 2,000 adults, Bogart determined that equal proportions of the population read newspapers and watch television on a typical weekday. He concluded that newspapers remain a viable medium despite the growing importance of television.[11]

In a telephone sampling of 8,332 people in 10 cities, Burgoon, Burgoon, and Wilkinson found the dimensions of competence/trust and personalism/surveillance to be reliable predictors of satisfaction with the print media. Respondents' answers to questions designed to determine the dimensions of judgment used to assess credibility of newspapers also indicated bias and sensationalism were unrelated to satisfaction with the product.[12]

In a study examining news media usage by older adults, Doolittle recorded in-depth interviews with 108 respondents at senior citizen centers in Bloomington, Ind., and Indianapolis. The data showed newspapers were favored by the younger among the respondents, whose ages ranged from 48 to 93 years, while the more senior citizens preferred television.[13]

Ethnic differences in the evaluation of newspaper image was studied by Burgoon, Burgoon, and Shatzer. Using data from three nationwide questionnaire surveys (14,378 respondents), the researchers found race not to be a truly meaningful predictor of newspaper evaluations.[14]

Burgoon, Burgoon, and Buller also assessed newspaper image via dimensions and relation to demographics and satisfaction. Findings showed the public's perceptions of newspaper image have expanded, and the evidence indicated discrimination on the public's part with regard to which papers are doing "a good job," and which are not.[15]

Lavarkas and Holley conducted six telephone surveys in the primary market areas of six dailies during 1985 and 1986 to measure readership patterns and interests, newspaper image, and demographics. Based on their findings, the authors recommended that editors and publishers might well consider the benefits of regular local-level readership surveys to compliment those generated on a national scale.[16]

Finnegan and Viswanath investigated cable television and newspaper use patterns in a Midwestern suburb on the premise that as individuals develop deeper ties to the community, they use media to strengthen and reinforce said ties. Data showed people between 35 and 54 years of age were most likely to use cable television, while older persons leaned toward reading metropolitan dailies. Only usage of weekly community newspapers was linked with neighborhood involvement.[17]

Along with image, credibility has long ranked high on the list of factors print journalists believe to be critical to the survival of newspapers. In May 1985, Self asked 508 respondents four questions dealing with the "perceived task of news report as a predictor of media choice." Although neither sex nor age proved good predictors in this study, both education and income were significantly related to three of the four variables examined. The distressing results of this research--from the standpoint of newspapers--is that, regardless of "perceived task" of news reports, even daily readers consistently chose television over newspapers when conflicting media reports existed. The lone exception to this was local news coverage.[18]

Mass communications researchers have studied the relationship between satisfaction with newspaper content and readership.

In a study duplicating a 1974 survey dealing with predicting newspaper readership via content characteristics, McCombs, Mauro, and Son concluded that "overall, the front page of a section is a key predictor of readership for all kinds of content."[19]

Kenney and Lacy based their research on the notion that the public wants more color, photographs, and informational graphics. Findings showed that while television and group ownership does not affect the number and area of graphics and the space devoted to color, direct newspaper competition within local markets does.[20]

The continuing increase in the use of color and graphics as a bid for greater readership has been linked often to the stunning success of *USA Today*. Hartman combined a survey of 18- to 35-year-olds in a Midwestern university community and personal interviews from a cross-section of Midwest newspaper editors to study whether "new-style" format can win back young-adult readers.

The study findings, while not overwhelming in scope, suggest "the *USA Today* approach to be the most promising current effort at winning over 18-35s to the newspaper-reading habit and solidifying the hold on 18-35s who are already reading newspapers."[21]

A content analysis of 30 American dailies by Smith and Hajash was an attempt to measure the strong impact *USA Today* appears to have had on changes in the appearance of newspapers. The study assessed 12 variables, bringing the researchers to conclude--among other things--that the use of graphics is playing a greater role in how newspapers relay information.[22]

Bogart, using data from a 1983 survey of 1,310 dailies conducted by the Newspaper Advertising Bureau, examined content changes since 1979. Findings showed major changes with regard to graphics and layout. Editorial content is more compartmentalized; sports and business coverage has shown a marked increase; and "op-ed" pages are on the rise. Strangely, despite readership research showing preference for special interest features, Bogart found the newspapers surveyed to be less likely to run regular features on specific topics than in the past.[23]

Lipschultz, in an attempt to determine why some people appear to avoid reading newspapers, examined 12 characteristics involved in the decision not to read a newspaper. Lipschultz found "beyond the significant differences in amounts of formal education and age, demographics were not very useful in highlighting the differences between readers and nonreaders." More telling in determining rationale for nonreadership of newspapers were attitudinal variables such as use of radio/television, cost, usefulness, interest, trust, and amount of details.[24]

Poindexter examined nonreaders as 567 adults in nine cities were interviewed in two waves. Findings from first-wave responses pointed to avoidance of newspapers being based on lack of time, preference for other news media, cost, and lack of interest. The second-wave conclusions, in which nonreaders were typed, showed the average nonreader to have low income and education levels and to be among the young or elderly.[25]

Circulation figures were assessed in relation to factors such as demographic changes and price increases as the basis of a predictive study by Bogart. He concluded that the future of the metropolitan daily should be viewed in terms of editorial content relevant to younger people, a greater attempt to lure readership among Black and Hispanic Americans, and a push at the elementary and high school levels for greater newspaper readership.[26]

As the previous discussion has shown, readership surveys, whether undertaken alone or as part of a combination study, are obviously the method of choice among print media researchers attempting to determine a game plan for the healthy future of newspapers. More importantly, academic and industry investigators have examined numerous variables to determine how the newspaper business should serve its public to preserve its future. Knowledge of subscriber reading habits, media usage habits, audience satisfaction, effectiveness of graphic techniques, content changes, and even non-reader demographics are just some of the topics which have contributed variables for investigators to examine.

Seldom, however, have investigators assessed the perceptions of both journalists and subscribers together concerning the future of the business. Financial analysts perceive a difference between the two groups because of drops in circulation figures and advertising revenues. But as pointed out earlier, concern over the myriad of other variables which have been thrown into the equation has created some confusion over which strategy will be the most effective. Should newspapers continue to reach out to various audience factions--e.g., teenagers, women, baby boomers, etc.--or should they just do the things they do best without trying to be all things to all people?

This study looks at the problem from a different perspective and seeks the answer to one major research question: Do subscribers and journalists have similar perceptions about the future of the newspaper business? By using a Q-Sort approach, the investigators present an opportunity for subscribers and editors to do a "gut-check," if you will, to determine if they are on the "same page" concerning some basic questions, e.g., Do readers think that newspapers have a future? Do editors have the only answers when it comes to presenting to readers a daily diet of news? Is aggressive marketing likely to bring readers back to newspapers? Should newspapers be all things to all people? Since the findings to this study's research question are purely subjective in nature, as provided by subscribers and newspeople, the results can be interpreted only as patterns of opinions by subscribers and newspersons, and no attempt is made to generalize these patterns to any groups other than those involved in this study.

## METHOD

In order to examine the research question posed, a total of 48 newspersons and readers, evenly split, were chosen for a purposive sample. The 24 newspeople were selected from 19 newspapers in the East Central Indiana area, including Indianapolis. Of the 24, 13 were editors and 11 reporters, while 17 were males and seven were females. Circulations of the newspapers ranged from 4,000 to 225,000. The subscribers, who were drawn from the newspapers used in this study, were comprised of 13 males and 11 females, and three Afro-Americans were in the sample. Seven of the subscribers lived in an urban area; 12, suburban; and five, rural. Their ages ranged from 21 to 59, and 15 were involved in white-collar jobs with the rest in blue-collar jobs. In the subscriber sample, 14 of the respondents had at least one college degree.

Each of the 48 subjects were administered a Q-Sort in person and asked to rank 64 statements about the future of newspapers on an 11-point, Likert-type most agree/most disagree scale. The Q-Sort is a behavioral research technique, introduced by William Stephenson,[27] which allows the investigator systematically to study subjectivity. While each Q-Sort reflects each newsperson's own point of view about the future of newspapers, Q-Sort rankings are subsequently subjected to factor analysis, which provides clusters of statements which constitute patterns of opinions toward the subject. Because investigators are interested in the patterns of statements which arise from the sorts, their focus is on the qualitative aspects of the statements rather than the quantitative. As a result, investigators are concerned with patterns of opinions found among subscribers and newspersons rather than on what might be considered the average opinions concerning the topic.

A concourse of statements dealing with the future of newspapers was derived from extensive review of published materials, both academic journals and trade periodicals. A structured set of 64 statements was drawn from the concourse for this study because, according to Emmert and Brooks, this method is "especially advantageous to the testing of theory . . . one can build theory into the research tool and better test theory in operational terms."[28] The structured sort was devised to measure attitudes concerning five basic areas--editorial content, responsiveness to readers, marketing, technology, and openness to change.

Responses were computer tabulated at Ball State University using the QUANAL factor analysis program. The QUANAL analysis provided two factors after Varimax (orthogonal) rotation, and at least two of the factor loadings on each hypothetical array were significant at the .01 level. Factor loadings were considered significant if they exceeded .374. This significant correlation was determined by a procedure using the standard error of a zero order loading, which is explained in Brown.[29] QUANAL also provided a descending array of statements and weighted z-scores for each factor type. Scores above and below a z-score criterion of 1.0 for each factor were considered significant. (See Appendix 1 for a two-factor summary of z-scores for all 64 statements) Because a strong correlation was found among the two typal arrays, investigators employed another technique explained in Brown which would highlight significant differences in statements between each typal array. The z-scores for each statement on each factor type were converted into rounded factor scores, which conformed to the scores which each statement received when the data was originally collected. Those rounded factor scores which differed for each statement by three or more between each factor were considered to be significant, and they were used to distinguish each factor from the other.

Once each of the factors was determined, the investigators inspected the demographics for each of the subjects who comprised each factor type to determine if any of the demographic characteristics would help provide more information about the factor types.

## FINDINGS

After the Q Sorts had been tabulated and submitted for analysis, two factors emerged from the sorts of 48 editors and subscribers. For the first factor (Factor I), 26 subjects sorted their statements in similar manner, and 20 of those sorts were contributed by the subscribers. On the second factor (Factor II), 22 subjects sorted in similar fashion and 18 of those sorts were contributed by editors. The correlation between the two factors was .608, and the both factors accounted for 33 percent of the total variance.

Although there is a great deal of similarity between both factor types, each of the attitude patterns presented by each group presented a different viewpoint about the future of daily newspapers.

TABLE 1: STATEMENTS WITH WHICH FACTOR I SUBJECTS SIGNIFICANTLY AGREE OR DISAGREE

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 41. | Even if newspapers are doomed, I will continue to read a newspaper as long as there is one to be had. | 2.510* |
| 47. | Making use of advanced technology will be very important to the future of newspapers. | 1.861 |
| 27. | In order to survive, newspapers of the future must offer a perspective television simply can't match. | 1.659 |
| 6. | Substance will still be more important than style in newspapers of the future. | 1.398 |
| 12. | A greater emphasis on local news will be one of the keys to the success of newspapers of the future. | 1.333 |
| 57. | Newspapers of the future should worry less about deadlines and focus more on giving readers clear accounts of the reasons behind a news event and possible ramifications of that event. | 1.280 |
| 22. | People will always turn to newspapers for in-depth news. | 1.238 |
| 17. | One of the central purposes of the newspaper of the future should be to address controversial issues. | 1.197 |
| 54. | Being all things to all people is an unrealistic goal for newspapers of the future. | 1.161 |
| 35. | In the future, knowing and responding to your market will not be one of the most important factors in the success of a newspaper. | -1.075 |
| 49. | If newspapers of the future are going to be dramatically different, I probably won't read them as much. | -1.102 |
| 2. | Traditional, serious journalism will be missing in newspapers of the future. | -1.276 |
| 20. | Newspapers of the future should be directed only at a small, elite audience of highly-educated people. | -1.978 |
| 63. | No matter what changes newspapers make, they are living on borrowed time. | -2.149 |
| 14. | It's only a matter of time before television completely wipes out the newspaper industry. | -2.382* |
| 8. | Newspapers are headed for extinction. | -3.432 |

*Denotes significant statement for this factor after comparing rounded factor scores.

As a method of identifying these two factors, arbitrary labels were created by the investigators which seemed appropriate for each factor based on the demographics which were associated with each factor. Factor I subjects were labeled "Subscribers," and Factor II subjects were labeled "Newspeople."

**FACTOR I: Subscribers.** Respondents in this factor presented an upbeat and rather focused view of where the newspaper business should be headed (See Table I). Subscribers are committed to newspaper reading, and they disagree that newspapers are headed for extinction. They make it clear that newspapers cannot be all things to all people. Nor should newspapers be directed only at the highly-educated. What they are looking for in their newspapers is depth of coverage. They feel that newspapers should place more emphasis on local news, present clear news accounts with interpretation when necessary, and that newspapers should be willing to address controversial issues. Substance will be more important than style.

Subscribers accept that new technology and marketing will play a key role in the future of the newspaper business, and they understand that newspapers will have to provide a perspective that television cannot match. They feel that the future focus of newspapers should be on better local coverage and more in-depth news. Based on rounded factor scores, three other statements which helped to differentiate Subscribers from Factor II respondents were as follows:

31. Good journalists should never "market the news," even if their newspaper's survival depends upon it.
1. Newspapers of the future will not be much different than today's newspapers.
15. Newspapers of the future will bear little resemblence to today's newspapers.

Subscribers agree with statements #31 and #1, and disagree with #15. Interestingly, they feel that newspapers should have more integrity than to "market" their news. Subscribers would suggest that good journalism does not need any marketing. And, they don't expect to see many differences in their newspapers of the future from what they see today. Marketing gimmicks, slick packaging, superficial editorial efforts might not appeal to these subscribers, who seek only a daily news diet of clear, rational, sometimes controversial, and in-depth reporting.

**FACTOR II: Newspeople.** Of the 64 statements sorted, one-third of them were either significantly accepted or rejected by "newspeople." Indecision and paranoia underlie the response pattern for "newspeople," which can be typified by the "be everything to everyone" syndrome. Respondents here feel that aggressive marketing, new technology, a broader definition of news, more local coverage, and trying to tailor their product to meet individual needs are all keys to the future of newspapers. The fear is that unless newspapers make an effort to satisfy all of their audiences, they will become irrelevant to the lives of their readers (See Table 2).

TABLE 2: STATEMENTS WITH WHICH FACTOR II SUBJECTS SIGNIFICANTLY AGREE OR DISAGREE

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 59. | Newspapers of the future must be more user friendly. | 2.367* |
| 12. | A greater emphasis on local news will be one of the keys to the success of newspaper in the future. | 2.004 |
| 27. | In order to survive, newspapers of the future must offer a perspective television simply can't match. | 1.949 |
| 51. | Newspapers of the future should be more aggressive in soliciting and catering to the public's wants and needs. | 1.739* |
| 4. | Newspapers of the future should be more tailored to reader's individual needs. | 1.675* |
| 7. | Newspapers of the future will need to broaden their definition of news. | 1.584 |
| 53. | One of the biggest dangers to the future success of newspapers is that newspapers will simply become irrelevant to the lives of many. | 1.426* |
| 47. | Making use of advanced technology will be very important to the future of newspapers. | 1.376 |
| 23. | Newspapers of the future should market their product more aggressively. | 1.369* |
| 34. | Newspapers of the future should return to more meat & potatoes type coverage, devoting more space to coverage of local events and people. | 1.330 |
| 38. | Newspapers of the future must be aggressive in telling readers what news means to them. | 1.235 |
| 20. | Newspapers of the future should be directed only at a small, elite audience of highly-educated people. | -1.040 |
| 44. | In the future, reporters and editors will have less contact with the public. | -1.042 |
| 16. | Newspapers of the future should devote less space to 'soft news' such as entertainment features, human-interest stories, advice columns, and lifestyle news. | -1.067 |
| 55. | The most successful newspapers of the future will be consciously elitist. | -1.101 |
| 63. | No matter what changes newspapers make, they are living on borrowed time. | -1.120 |
| 11. | Warmth and humor will not be important ways of connecting with readers in the future. | -1.177 |
| 35. | In the future, knowing and responding to your market will not be one of the most important factors in the success of a newspaper. | -1.305 |
| 36. | Lack of community involvement on the part of editors and reporters will not affect newspaper readership in the future. | -1.405 |
| 13. | Editors will always know better than readers what should be in a newspaper. | -1.446 |
| 33. | In the future, journalists will not need to change their opinion about what makes a good newspaper. | -1.584* |
| 2. | Traditional, serious journalism will be missing in newspapers of the future. | -1.634 |
| 8. | Newspapers are headed for extinction. | -1.908 |

*Denotes significant statements for this factor after comparing rounded factor scores.

Statements which Factor II respondents disagree with continue to illustrate the kind of confusion journalists are presently feeling over this issue. They agree that newspapers should devote more space to soft news, and that warmth and humor are ways to connect with readers in the future. At the same time, they feel that serious journalism will be in evidence in future newspapers, although they feel that journalists will need to change their opinions about what makes a good newspaper. Newspeople agree with subscribers that newspapers will survive in the future, but whether journalists can meet the objectives they prescribe and still remain commited to serious journalism remains to be seen.

Although both Factor I and Factor II present seemingly diverse attitudes toward the question of the future of the newspaper business, some statements were universally agreed upon by both groups involved in the study. These 10 consensus items were significant because their z-scores exceeded the required 1.000 criterion (See Table 3).

TABLE 3: SIGNIFICANT CONSENSUS ITEMS AND AVERAGE Z-SCORES FOR ALL 48 SUBJECTS

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 27. | In order to survive, newspapers of the future must offer a perspective television simply can't match. | 1.804 |
| 12. | A greater emphasis on local news will be one of the keys to the success of newspapers in the future. | 1.668 |
| 47. | Making use of advanced technology will be very important to the future of newspapers. | 1.619 |
| 7. | Newspapers of the future will need to broaden their definition of news. | 1.253 |
| 6. | Substance will still be more important than style in newspapers of the future. | 1.043 |
| 11. | Warmth and humor will not be important ways of connecting with readers in the future. | -1.080 |
| 35. | In the future, knowing and responding to your market will not be one of the most important factors in the success of a newspaper. | -1.190 |
| 13. | Editors will always know better than readers what should be in a newspaper. | -1.215 |
| 2. | Traditional, serious journalism will be missing in newspapers of the future. | -1.455 |
| 20. | Newspapers of the future should be directed only at a small, elite audience of highly-educated people. | -1.509 |

Both subscribers and newspeople agreed that substance and depth will be the key to the future of newspapers. Newspapers will be faced with the task of finding a niche in their markets which the electronic media cannot fill. That niche seems to revolve around an emphasis on local news, no matter what the size of the market, plus a broader definition of news for their subscribers. Knowledge of their market will be important to newspeople, but that knowledge should not be depend only on small or elite audiences of highly-educated people. The emphasis should be put on the product, not on the marketing of the product which could sacrifice serious journalism in the future.

## CONCLUSIONS

Over the past decade, the newpaper business has been in a frenzy to find a solution to declining subscriber lists, market penetration, and advertising income. The smaller the bottom line has become, the louder the rhetoric by practitioners and academics. Indecision and confusion have reined as the industry has tried to grapple with its problems.

This study presented a sampling of opinions and ideas taken from the literature over the past decade and presented them to both newspaper practitioners and subscribers to see if there was any unanimity between the two groups. This study found some similarities in basic viewpoints, but each group seems to have a different agenda for how to arrive at the same outcome. Practitioners mirror the frustration of the industry at this point, and they seem to believe that newspapers can be all things to all people. They are afraid that unless they change their views of what is news, they will become irrelevant to the lives of their readers. They see specialized marketing to the individual wants and needs of their readers, by means of new technologies, as a way to solve their problems.

Subscribers in this study, on the other hand, believe that newspapers need to refocus their efforts on local issues and present a clear, concise, and hard-hitting interpretation of that news. They are commited to reading newspapers, and they think that newspapers should include an in-depth approach to the news, something which televison has not been able to provide. They seem to have more confidence in the newspaper business then those in the business, and they have fewer doubts that the business will survive.

S.L. Harrison, while lamenting the current trend toward press-bashing, may have captured what subscribers in this study are trying to say:

> Increasingly, newspapers are adopting the 'magazine look.' If people want magazines, they will buy magazines. Too few people get the kind of newspapers they want: a newspaper with news. Too many newspaper people use the god-awful term 'news hole.' Too often that is exactly what it is, a hole.[30]

## NOTES

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# APPENDIX 1

## Item Descriptions and Typal Z-Scores for Two Factors

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                         ITEM DESCRIPTIONS                                 TYPAL Z'S
                                                                            1    2
                                             N'S FOR EACH TYPE ARE         25   22

 1.NEWSPAPERS OF THE FUTURE WILL NOT BE MUCH DIFFERENT THAN TODAY'S       0.7 -0.5
     NEWSPAPERS.
 2.TRADITIONAL, SERIOUS JOURNALISM WILL BE MISSING IN NEWSPAPERS OF      -1.3 -1.6
     THE FUTURE.
 3.A NEWSPAPER WILL HAVE TO BE MORE RESPONISVE TO THE INFORMATION         0.5  0.9
     NEEDS OF A MASS AUDIENCE TO SUCCEED IN THE FUTURE.
 4.NEWSPAPERS OF THE FUTURE SHOULD BE MORE TAILORED TO READER'S          -0.0  1.7
     INDIVIDUAL NEEDS.
 5.LONG, IN-DEPTH STORIES WILL NOT BE COMMONPLACE IN NEWSPAPERS          -0.2  0.1
     OF THE FUTURE.
 6.SUBSTANCE WILL STILL BE MORE IMPORTANT THAN STYLE IN NEWSPAPERS        1.4  0.7
     OF THE FUTURE.
 7.NEWSPAPERS OF THE FUTURE WILL NEED TO BROADEN THEIR DEFINITION         0.9  1.6
     OF NEWS.
 8.NEWSPAPERS ARE HEADED FOR EXTINCTION.                                 -3.4 -1.9
 9.NEWSPAPERS OF THE FUTURE MUST FIND WAYS NOT TO REPEAT BROADCAST       -0.1  0.5
     NEWS.
10.NEWSPAPERS OF THE FUTURE WILL FAIL IF THEY DON'T PRINT ENOUGH         -0.1 -0.5
     HAPPY NEWS.
11.WARMTH AND HUMOR WILL NOT BE IMPORTANT WAYS OF CONNECTING WITH        -1.0 -1.2
     READERS IN THE FUTURE.
12.A GREATER EMPHASIS ON LOCAL NEWS WILL BE ONE OF THE KEYS TO THE        1.3  2.0
     SUCCESS OF NEWSPAPERS IN THE FUTURE.
13.EDITORS WILL ALWAYS KNOW BETTER THAN READERS WHAT SHOULD BE IN A      -1.0 -1.4
     NEWSPAPER.
14.IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE TELEVISION COMPLETELY WIPES         -2.4 -1.0
     OUT THE NEWSPAPER INDUSTRY.
15.NEWSPAPERS OF THE FUTURE WILL BEAR LITTLE RESEMBLANCE TO TODAY'S      -0.5  0.5
     NEWSPAPERS.
16.NEWSPAPERS OF THE FUTURE SHOULD DEVOTE LESS SPACE TO 'SOFT NEWS'     -0.6 -1.1
     SUCH AS ENTERTAINMENT FEATURES, HUMAN-INTEREST STORIES, ADVICE COLUMNS,
     AND LIFESTYLE NEWS.
17.ONE OF THE CENTRAL PURPOSES OF THE NEWSPAPER OF THE FUTURE SHOUL       1.2  0.3
     BE TO ADDRESS CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES.
18.NEWSPAPER READERSHIP WILL DECLINE IN THE FUTURE BECAUSE MOST OF       -0.4 -0.7
     THE POPULATION WILL BECOME LAZIER.
19.NEWSPAPER CIRCULATION WILL INCREASE IN THE FUTURE BECAUSE MORE O       0.3 -0.5
     THE PUBLIC WILL BE BETTER-EDUCATED AND MORE INCLINED TOWARD READING
     NEWSPAPERS AS A WAY TO STAY WELL-INFORMED.
20.NEWSPAPERS OF THE FUTURE SHOULD BE DIRECTED ONLY AS A SMALL,          -2.0 -1.0
     ELITE AUDIENCE OF HIGHLY-EDUCATED PEOPLE.
21.NEWSPAPERS WILL NOT BE AS INFLUENTIAL IN THE FUTURE IN COMPARISO      -0.3 -0.0
     TO OTHER MEDIA.
22.PEOPLE WILL ALWAYS TURN TO NEWSPAPERS FOR IN-DEPTH NEWS.               1.2  0.3
23.NEWSPAPERS OF THE FUTURE SHOULD MARKET THEIR PRODUCT MORE             -0.0  1.4
     AGGRESSIVELY.
24.IT IS IMPORTANT TO THE FUTURE OF NEWSPAPERS THAT PRINT JOURNALIS      -0.3  0.1
     BE CONSIDERED MORE INFLUENTIAL THAN JOURNALISTS IN OTHER MEDIA.

25.FLASHY DESIGN WILL BE A COVER FOR POOR CONTENT IN NEWSPAPERS OF       -0.3 -0.8
     THE FUTURE.
26.NEWSPAPERS OF THE FUTURE ARE DOOMED BECAUSE THE PUBLIC OF THE         -0.5 -0.7
     FUTURE WILL BE MORE CONCERNED WITH BEING ENTERTAINED THAN BEING INFORMED
27. IN ORDER TO SURVIVE, NEWSPAPERS OF THE FUTURE MUST OFFER A            1.7  1.9
     PERSPECTIVE TELEVISION SIMPLY CAN'T MATCH.
28.IN ORDER TO SURVIVE, NEWSPAPERS OF THE FUTURE WILL HAVE TO TARGE       0.1 -0.0
     SMALL AUDIENCES BASED ON DEMOGRAPHICS AND GEOGRAPHY.
29.IN THE FUTURE, NEWSPAPERS THAT LOOK GOOD WILL BE MORE SUCCESSFUL      -0.1 -0.6
     THAN NEWSPAPERS WITH GOOD CONTENT.
30.THE FUTURE OF THE NEWSPAPER INDUSTRY DEPENDS ON ITS ACCEPTANCE        -0.1 -0.2
     OF ACADEMIC RESEARCH AS A TOOL FOR IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF NEWSPAPERS.
31.GOOD JOURNALISTS SHOULD NEVER 'MARKET THE NEWS,' EVEN IF THEIR         0.8 -0.8
     NEWSPAPER'S SURVIVAL DEPENDS UPON IT.
32.IN THE FUTURE, RESPONDING TO READERSHIP SURVEYS WILL BE ESSENTIA       0.6  0.7
     TO THE ECONOMIC WELL-BEING OF NEWSPAPERS.
33.IN THE FUTURE, JOURNALISTS WILL NOT NEED TO CHANGE THEIR OPINION      -0.5 -1.6
     ABOUT WHAT MAKES A GOOD NEWSPAPER.
34.NEWSPAPERS OF THE FUTURE SHOULD RETURN TO MORE MEAT & POTATOES         0.5  1.3
     TYPE COVERAGE, DEVOTING MORE SPACE TO COVERAGE OF LOCAL EVENTS AND PEOPL
35.IN THE FUTURE, KNOWING AND RESPONDING TO YOUR MARKET WILL NOT BE      -1.1 -1.3
     ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTORS IN THE SUCCESS OF A NEWSPAPER.
36.LACK OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT ON THE PART OF EDITORS AND REPORTE      -0.5 -1.4
     WILL NOT AFFECT NEWSPAPER READERSHIP IN THE FUTURE.
37.INCREASED FUNCTIONAL ILLITERACY WILL BE ONE OF THE MAIN REASONS        0.3 -0.4
     FOR DECLINING NEWSPAPER READERSHIP IN THE FUTURE.
38.NEWSPAPERS OF THE FUTURE MUST BE AGGRESSIVE IN TELLING READERS W      -0.1  1.2
     NEWS MEANS TO THEM.
39.TELEVISION WILL BE A PLUS TO NEWSPAPERS OF THE FUTURE IN TERMS O       0.9 -0.4
     CREATING INTEREST IN NEWS EVENTS.
40.NEWSPAPERS WILL LOSE CIRCULATION RELATIVE TO POPULATION OVER THE       0.1  0.2
     NEXT 10 YEARS.
41.EVEN IF NEWSPAPERS ARE DOOMED, I WILL CONTINUE TO READ A NEWSPAP       2.5 -0.5
     AS LONG AS THERE IS ONE TO BE HAD.
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42.I WISH I THOUGHT NEWSPAPERS HAD A BRIGHTER FUTURE.                    -0.5 -0.5
43.IN THE FUTURE, IT WILL BE IMPORTANT THAT REPORTERS AND EDITORS         0.3  0.5
    SHARE SIMILAR VALUES AND INTERESTS WITH THEIR READERS.
44.IN THE FUTURE, REPORTERS AND EDITORS WILL HAVE LESS CONTACT WITH      -0.8 -1.0
    THE PUBLIC.
45.ACADEMIC RESEARCH CONCERNING NEWSPAPERS WILL NOT BE VALUABLE IN       -0.2 -0.5
    FUTURE BECAUSE SCHOLARS WILL NEVER BE IN TOUCH WITH THE REAL WORLD.
46.REPORTERS AND EDITORS OF THE FUTURE SHOULD PUT GREAT VALUE ON TH       0.2  0.4
    FINDINGS OF NEWSPAPER INDUSTRY RESEARCH.
47.MAKING USE OF ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY WILL BE VERY IMPORTANT TO THE        1.9  1.4
    FUTURE OF NEWSPAPERS.
48.THE SUCCESS OF NEWSPAPERS OF THE FUTURE WILL NOT REALLY BE            -0.1 -0.0
    DETERMINED BY TECHNOLOGY.

49.IF NEWSPAPERS OF THE FUTURE ARE GOING TO BE DRAMATICALLY DIFFERE      -1.1 -0.6
    I PROBABLY WON'T READ THEM AS MUCH.
50.I'M EXCITED ABOUT THE PROSPECT OF BIG CHANGES OCCURRING IN THE         0.3  0.7
    FUTURE WITHIN THE NEWSPAPER INDUSTRY.
51.NEWSPAPERS OF THE FUTURE SHOULD BE MORE AGGRESSIVE IN SOLICITING       0.3  1.7
    AND CATERING TO THE PUBLIC'S WANTS AND NEEDS.
52.IN THE FUTURE, NEWSPAPERS' STAFFS SHOULD BE AS DEMOGRAPHICALLY         0.8  0.3
    DIVERSE AS THE COMMUNITIES THEY COVER.
53.ONE OF THE BIGGEST DANGERS TO THE FUTURE SUCCESS OF NEWSPAPERS I      -0.6  1.4
    THAT NEWSPAPERS WILL SIMPLY BECOME IRRELEVANT TO THE LIVES OF MANY.
54.BEING ALL THINGS TO ALL PEOPLE IS AN UNREALISTIC GOAL FOR              1.2  0.3
    NEWSPAPERS OF THE FUTURE.
55.THE MOST SUCCESSFUL NEWSPAPERS OF THE FUTURE WILL BE CONSCIOUSLY      -0.8 -1.1
    ELITIST.
56.IN THE FUTURE, MOST REPORTERS AND EDITORS WILL BE BETTER EDUCATE      -0.1 -0.2
    THAN MOST OF THEIR READERS.
57.NEWSPAPERS OF THE FUTURE SHOULD WORRY LESS ABOUT DEADLINES AND         1.3  0.5
    FOCUS MORE ON GIVING READERS CLEAR ACCOUNTS OF THE REASONS BEHIND A NEWS
    EVENT AND POSSIBLE RAMIFICATIONS OF THAT EVENT.
58.IN THE FUTURE, EDITORS AND REPORTERS SHOULD MAKE MORE CONTENT AN       0.6  1.0
    COVERAGE DECISIONS BASED ON READERSHIP SURVEYS.
59.NEWSPAPERS OF THE FUTURE MUST BE MORE USER FRIENDLY.                   0.6  2.4
60.SERIOUS JOURNALISM WILL BE UNDERMINED IN THE FUTURE IF NEWSPAPER      -0.0 -0.4
    PANDER TO READERS.
61.MARKETING NEWSPAPERS THROUGH ADVERTISING WILL BE OF GREAT              0.0  0.2
    IMPORTANCE IN THE FUTURE.
62.THE ONLY CHANGES NEWSPAPERS NEED TO MAKE IN THE FUTURE ARE BETTE      -0.0 -0.6
    REPORTING, BETTER WRITING, AND BETTER PRESENTATION.
63.NO MATTER WHAT CHANGES NEWSPAPERS MAKE, THEY ARE LIVING ON            -2.1 -1.1
    BORROWED TIME.
64.IF NEWSPAPERS MAKE THE RIGHT CHANGES, READERSHIP IN THE FUTURE W       0.5  0.3
    INCREASE RELATIVE TO POPULATION.
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# The Relationship Between Daily and Weekly Newspaper Penetration In Non-Metropolitan Areas

by

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For more than 100 years, the newspaper industry has experienced a decline in the number of cities with two or more separately owned and operated daily newspapers.[1] While media critics have lamented about this trend, Rosse pointed out in 1975 that single-daily cities are not necessarily monopolies because they face competition from other mass media, daily newspapers located in other cities, and non-daily newspapers. He used the term "umbrella competition" to denote the competition among different types of newspapers.[2]

Research has supported the existence of umbrella competition and its impact on content and circulation. However, most studies about the impact of umbrella competition on circulation and penetration have been limited to metropolitan areas. The potential for umbrella competition exists away from metropolitan areas, but little research has been published about its impact in these areas. This study will examine the impact of umbrella competition on penetration away from metropolitan areas, using the newspaper industry in Michigan during the 1980s.

## The Umbrella Model

Rosse's umbrella model classifies newspapers into four "layers" based on geography and content. Newspapers in one layer form an umbrella of competition over the newspapers in the layers below.

Large daily newspapers published in the central cities of metropolitan areas formed Rosse's first, or metropolitan daily, layer of newspapers. These newspaper emphasize regional, national and international news, in addition to local news.[3]

The second layer is composed of satellite-city daily newspapers. They provide some regional, national and international news, but they tend to be more locally oriented than the metro dailies.

Suburban daily newspapers make up Rosse's third layer. Markets for suburban dailies overlap very little, and these dailies tend to carry primarily local news.

The fourth layer of newspapers contains a variety of newspapers that are published up to three times a week. The layer includes paid-distribution newspapers, shopping guides, and free distribution publications. Content in such publications is almost exclusively local in nature.

The circulation of all layers tends to be dense around the city of publication, dropping off as one moves away from the home city. Rosse said newspapers in the higher layers have better quality and attract readers with their regional, national and international coverage. He also said that the local nature of lower-layer newspapers can give them an advantage even though they are generally of lower quality.

Rosse noted that the important competition among newspapers is interlayer rather than intralayer. He ruled out intralayer competition because, within a given layer, the circulation zones of similar sized newspapers hardly overlap. However, some research suggests that this may not be the case away from metropolitan areas.[4]

Moreover, Rosse predicted that the metropolitan dailies' circulation would decline as smaller newspapers took on some of their functions. In effect, intercity newspaper and intermedia competition would erode the economic base of the large metro dailies.

The umbrella model is limited because it is a conceptual model that contains only a few hypothetical relationships and because the model does not specify how extensive competition will be among newspapers across layers.

In addition, Rosse's discussion of the umbrella model emphasized metropolitan markets, which are, as Rosse pointed out, "media rich." Markets away from metropolitan areas may also contain several layers of newspaper,[5] but the number and types of layers found in any given newspaper market varies. One satellite daily may compete against weeklies and metro dailies, while another competes only against a weekly newspaper.

## Literature Review

Studies of umbrella competition fall into three types: circulation studies, which look at the impact of competition on circulation; content studies, which examine the impact of umbrella competition on news and editorial content; and advertising studies, which examine umbrella competition in the advertising market. Since this study concerns competition for readers, the literature review will concentrate on the first two categories.

### Circulation Research

Tillinghast applied the umbrella model while comparing circulation and penetration of various newspapers in Los Angeles and Orange counties.[6] She found vigorous interlayer competition, but little competition within layers.

Rosse had postulated that metropolitan newspapers would be at a comparative disadvantage in serving advertisers and readers at a distance from their central market. Tillinghast noted that this probably explained *The Los Angeles Times*' unsuccessful bid to gain circulation in San Diego County in 1978 when it launched massive operations to attract readership outside its primary market area.

In 1983, Lacy surveyed newspaper executives in the 13 largest standard metropolitan statistical areas in six Southwest states.[7] Results showed that umbrella competition was not equally intense in all SMSAs, and the intensity of competition between layers decreased with the distance of smaller dailies from metropolitan dailies.

Consistent with Rosse's prediction, most managers at lower-layer papers said umbrella competition would decline or remain the same. Most managers at metro dailies, however, said competition would increase.

Devey studied the Boston SMSA by comparing aggregate circulation figures of metro dailies and the combined figures of newspapers in the satellite and suburban layers with the aggregate change in population between 1945 and 1985. She found no evidence of umbrella competition.[8]

However, the use of aggregate market data could have affected Devey's findings. The fact that population growth in suburban and satellite areas equaled the circulation growth of newspapers in these layers does not necessarily show a lack of interlayer competition.

Some studies have explored how the structure of the metropolitan market affects umbrella competition. One study found that central city monopolies caused more intense circulation competition for lower-layer newspapers because the large profits of monopoly metro papers enabled them to finance their move into surrounding markets.[9]

Niebauer's study of six metropolitan areas with joint operating agreement newspapers and six with separately owned and operated newspapers found that the suburban newspapers around the JOA cities had higher circulation than those around the competitive markets.[10]

These studies were limited by sample size. A national study of 901 suburbs conducted by Niebauer and others found that the central city's market structure, whether competitive, monopoly or under a joint operating agreement, did not affect the existence or the circulation of suburban dailies, weeklies or semi-weeklies.[11] However, the authors cautioned that while the central city market structure may not create a barrier to entry or affect suburban newspaper circulation, it could still effect their ability to attract advertising and establish competitive rates.

**Content Research**

Since Rosse outlined the umbrella model, a few studies have examined the effect of intercity competition on the content of newspapers, and vice versa. A content analysis of newspapers in the three daily layers showed that as the intensity of intercity competition increased, the amount of newshole space and the proportion of newshole given to local stories increased.[12] However, differences in the coverage by the three types of dailies were not as clear-cut as the umbrella model seems to suggest. While suburban dailies carried a higher percentage of news about the city and county in which they were located, no significant difference existed between the city and county coverage provided by metro and satellite dailies.

The author noted that satellite dailies may not carry as much local news as suggested by Rosse because the relatively greater distance between the metro and satellite cities, as compared to that between metro and suburban cities, makes it more difficult for the metro dailies to compete for local coverage. Hence, the satellite dailies do not feel the pressure to differentiate themselves by providing more local coverage. This explanation is consistent with Rosse´s hypothesis that satellite dailies try to imitate the metro dailies. However, the satellite dailies devoted a significantly smaller percentage of their newshole to international news, which is inconsistent with Rosse´ prediction.

One study compared the competition between suburban non-dailies and metro dailies in Denver and Detroit.[13] The researchers reported that the metro dailies in the two cities were fairly similar in their coverage of suburban markets. The Denver suburban non-dailies provided more extensive news coverage of the home suburb than did the Detroit suburban non-dailies. Despite differences, the penetration of the suburban non-dailies and metro dailies in both markets was equivalent.

A second article from these data found a correlation between space devoted to topics about a suburb and the penetration of the metro daily in those suburbs.[14] This suggests that coverage of a given suburb is important in a metro daily´s success in that suburb.

## Hypotheses

While research during the past 18 years has supported the existence of umbrella competition, many questions remain unanswered, especially for competition away from metropolitan areas. This study addressed the following thirteen hypotheses:

1. As the metro dailies´ penetration within a county increases, the penetration of satellite dailies will decrease.

2. As the satellite dailies´ penetration within a county increases, the penetration of metro dailies will decrease.

3. As the metro dailies´ penetration within a county increases, the penetration of weeklies will decrease.

4. As the satellite dailies´ penetration within a county increases, the penetration of weeklies will decrease.

5. As the weeklies´ penetration within a county increase, the penetration of metro dailies will decrease.

6. As the weeklies´ penetration within a county increases, the penetration of satellite dailies will decrease.

7. As the metro dailies´ Sunday penetration within a county increases, the Sunday penetration of satellite dailies will decrease.

8. As the satellite dailies´ Sunday penetration within a county increases, the Sunday penetration of metro dailies will decrease.

9. As the metro dailies´ Sunday penetration within a county increase, the penetration of weeklies will decrease.

10. As the satellite dailies´ Sunday penetration within a county increases, the penetration of weeklies will decrease.

11. As the weeklies´ penetration within a county increases, the Sunday penetration of metro dailies will decrease.

12. As the weeklies´ penetration within a county increases, the Sunday penetration of satellite dailies will decrease.

13. The strength of the metro dailies´ impact on other layers will decline across time, compared to the strength of impact of satellite dailies and weeklies on other layers.

The first twelve hypotheses are based on the idea that newspapers in the various layers can be partial substitutes for each other. The substitutability is far from perfect, but it is assumed that a significant number of readers would be willing to consider newspapers from one layer as acceptable substitutes for newspapers in another. This substitution need not result in a zero-sum competition where penetration gains are made only at the expense of other newspapers. The hypotheses simply acknowledge that information demand varies with individuals and some people will find newspapers in different layers acceptable substitutes while other may not. The extent of acceptable substitution among layers is a function of the readers´ information needs and the content of the potentially substitutable newspapers.

The last hypothesis is based on: (1) Rosse´s hypothesis that satellite dailies will take on functions of metro dailies; and (2) research which found that metro daily manager and managers from newspapers in other layers disagreed about predictions of the future of umbrella competition.[15] This research suggested that the intensity of competition between metro dailies and other newspapers may be a function of metro daily managers´ decisions about where to distribute their newspapers and about the content of their newspapers. Metro newspapers have more flexibility as to where they circulate than do lower-layer newspapers, which have smaller geographic markets and fewer financial resources.

## Method

The newspaper penetration rates within the 80 Michigan counties outside Detroit for 1980, 1983, 1986 and 1989 were used to test these hypotheses. Michigan and the specific years were selected because of availability of data. This non-random sample limits the generalizability of the study, but it provides the opportunity to begin exploration of a new facet of umbrella competition research.

The county was used as the unit of analysis. The geographic market used for analysis had to be larger than a city because umbrella competition often takes place outside the immediate city but within the larger markets covered by newspapers. In the absence of market definitions from individual newspaper managements, the county seems like the best unit for defining the geographic market because of availability of data and the tendency of many smaller dailies and weeklies to look at the county as a natural market area.

Data for this study were taken from the 1981, 1984, 1987 and 1990 Michigan Press Association's Michigan Newspaper Directory,[16] which lists circulation figures for daily and non-daily newspapers in the state. Additional data came from the Newspaper Circulation Analysis, published by Standard Rate & Data Service, for 1981-82, 1984-85, 1987-88, 1990-1991.[17] This publication lists dailies by county that have a minimum of 5 percent penetration in the county.[18]

The SRDS data allowed the examination of a daily's circulation outside its home county. No data were available for non-dailies circulating outside their home counties. It was assumed that the market for weekly newspapers was the county of publication. It should be noted, however, that this assumption is not entirely accurate. Some weeklies circulate outside their home counties, but this circulation tends to be marginal. Most non-dailies do not have the resources to serve a market much larger than their home county.

The four layers of Rosse´s model were reduced to three for this study. Suburban dailies are found near large metropolitan areas, and because Detroit was excluded from this study, the suburban daily layer was dropped. This has been done in previous studies.[19]

The following definitions for the three layers were used:

1. Metro daily newspapers included the two dailies published within Detroit, the Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel and the Chicago Tribune. The Detroit papers were The Detroit News and the Detroit Free Press. While there are other fairly large cities in Michigan, only these two newspapers showed significant circulation throughout the state. The Tribune was included because it circulated in two west Michigan counties. The Milwaukee daily was included because by 1989 it circulated in several counties of the Michigan Upper Peninsula.

2. Satellite dailies were defined as all newspapers outside of the three-county Detroit metropolitan area that published five or more day a week.

3. Weekly newspapers were defined as all newspapers outside the three-county Detroit metropolitan area that published less than five days a week. The term weeklies was used for all

non-dailies as a matter of convenience.

Penetration rates within the county for all newspapers within a layer were the dependent and independent variables used in the study. Penetration for each newspaper was measured by dividing the circulation by the number of households in the county.

The penetration rates for all newspapers within a layer were added for each county because this study is testing the influence of layers and not of individual newspaper within the layers. Individual newspapers within layers probably vary in how well they substitute for various papers within other layers, but to determine this would require a content analysis that exceeds the resources of this study. By combining the penetration of newspaper within the layers, this study concentrates on the relationship among types of newspapers rather than individual newspapers within a geographic market.

The hypotheses were answered by running regression equations for all four years using penetration of metro dailies, satellite dailies and weeklies as dependent variables. The penetration of the two layers that were not used as the dependent variable in an equation were used as independent variables. Number of households was used as a control variable because market size has been found to be correlated with circulation in newspaper markets.[20] The data for the dependent and independent variables in each equation were from the same year. For example, in one equation, satellite daily penetration and weekly penetration in 1986 were independent variables for metro daily penetration in 1986.

The use of proportions in regression analysis raises the potential for spurious correlations based on the variables having the same denominator. Cohen and Cohen discussed this issue but note that this is not as big a problem with naturally occurring data as with survey and experimental data. They explained that this is not a problem for most naturally occurring data because the coefficient of variation is usually larger for numerators than for the denominators, which was the case with the variables here.[21]

Before running the regressions, data were checked for violations of the assumptions of regression analysis. Adjustment were made for some outliers, and none of the correlations among independent variables reached a level that would cause concern about multicollinearity.[22]

Regressions were run for daily penetration and Sunday penetration. This was done because Sunday editions can be bought separately from weekly subscriptions.

Because the counties were not randomly sampled, no inference is being made to a larger population. Therefore, levels of statistical significance have not been reported.

## Results

The average penetration rates in the counties showed a gradual decline for weeklies and satellite dailies during this period. The average penetration rate in 1980 for satellite dailies was 46.4%. The rate increased slightly to 47.7% three years later before dropping to 45.5% in 1986 and 43.7% in 1989. Weeklies started out with an average penetration rate of 69.8% in 1980 but dropped to 64.35% in 1983. This was followed by a slight increase in 1986 to 64.75% and a drop to 61.65% in 1989.

Only metro dailies saw an overall growth of in average penetration during this period. These dailies started with 10.8% penetration in 1980 and increased to 11.7% three years later. The penetration dropped slightly in 1986 to 11.1%, but rebounded to 13.1% in 1989. The growth during the last three years probably represents the intense competition between the _Detroit Free Press_ and _The Detroit News_ to gain readership as they moved toward a joint operating agreement.

The hypotheses can be divided into three groups. The first addresses the relationships among weekday penetration, the second deals with Sunday penetration, and the third concerns change across time. All hypotheses were tested using regression beta weights and the amount of unique variance in the dependent variable accounted for by the independent variables.

### Weekday Penetration

The first six hypotheses, which address the relationship among weeklies´ penetration, satellite daily penetration and metro daily penetration, are answered with data from tables 1 and 2. The first hypothesis states that as the metro penetration within the county increase, the penetration of satellite dailies will decrease. The regression equation in Table 1 support this hypothesis. The beta weights for the impact of metro daily penetration on satellite daily penetration were -.282 in 1980, -.318 in 1983, -.295 in 1986, and -.189 in 1989. Table 2 shows the amount of variance in satellite penetration uniquely associated with metro penetration was 7.6% in 1980, 8.8% in 1983, 8.1% in 1986, and 3.3% in 1989.

INSERT TABLES 1 AND 2 ABOUT HERE

Hypothesis two states that as satellite dailies' penetration within a county increases, the penetration of metro dailies will decrease. This hypothesis was supported with the beta weights from Table 1, which were -.427 in 1980, -.581 in 1983, -.613 in 1986, and -.344 in 1989. Table 2 shows that the variance in metro dailies' penetration accounted for uniquely by satellite dailies' penetration was 11.5% in 1980, 16.1% in 1986, 16.7% in 1986, and 6.1% in 1989.

The third hypothesis states that as the metro dailies' penetration within a county increases, the penetration of weeklies will decrease. This hypothesis was not supported. All four beta weights in Table 1 were in the right direction, but they were all small. In all four years, metro dailies' penetration accounted for less than .5% of weekly penetration.

The fourth hypothesis states that as satellite dailies' penetration within a county increases, the penetration of weeklies will decrease. This hypothesis was supported. The beta weights from Table 1 equalled -.564 in 1980, -.686 in 1983, -.754 in 1986, and -.651 in 1989. The amount of variance in weekly penetration uniquely associated with satellite daily penetration was 24.9% in 1980, 29.6% in 1983, 38.9% in 1986, and 32.8% in 1989.

The fifth hypothesis states that as weeklies' penetration within a county increases, the penetration of metro dailies will decrease. This hypothesis was not supported. The beta weights ranged from -.145 to .043. The variance in metro dailies' penetration accounted for by weeklies penetration was 1.9% in 1986, but less than 1% in the other three years.

The sixth hypothesis states that as the weeklies' penetration within a county increases, the penetration of satellite dailies will decrease. This hypothesis was supported. The beta weights in Table 1 equalled -.518 in 1980, -.556 in 1983, -.622 in 1986, and -.594 in 1989. The variance in satellite dailies' penetration uniquely associated with weeklies' penetration was 22.9% in 1980, 23.9% in 1983, 32.1% in 1986, and 30% in 1989.

### Sunday Penetration

Hypotheses seven through twelve concern the relationship among satellite dailies' Sunday penetration, metro dailies' Sunday penetration, and weeklies' penetration. Data from tables 3 and 4 are used to address these hypotheses.

INSERT TABLES 3 AND 4 ABOUT HERE

Hypothesis seven states that as the metro dailies' Sunday penetration within a county increases, the Sunday penetration of satellite dailies will decrease. This hypothesis is supported. The beta weights in Table 3 equalled -.383 in 1980, -.414 in 1983, -.385 in 1986, and -.443 in 1989. Table 4 shows that the variance in satellite dailies' Sunday penetration associated uniquely with the Sunday penetration of metro dailies was 13.8% in 1980, 13.9% in 1983, 13.5% in 1986, and 16.4% in 1989.

Hypothesis eight states that as the satellite dailies' Sunday penetration within a county increases the Sunday penetration of metro dailies will decrease. This hypothesis is supported. The beta weights in Table 3 were -.579 in 1980, -.674 in 1983, -.718 in 1986, and -.765 in 1989. Table 4 shows that the variance in metro dailies' Sunday penetration uniquely associated with the satellite dailies' Sunday penetration equalled in 20.1% in 1980, 22.7% in 1983, 25% in 1986, and 28.3% in 1989.

Hypothesis nine states that as the metro dailies' Sunday penetration within a county increases, the penetration of weeklies will decrease. This hypothesis was not supported. However, a small but notable positive relationship was found between metro dailies' Sunday penetration and the penetration of weeklies. The beta weights from Table 3 equalled .247 in 1980, .427 in 1983, .222 in 1986, and .327 in 1989. The amount of variance in weeklies' penetration uniquely associated with the Sunday penetration of metro dailies was 4.7% in 1980, 12.3% in 1983, 6.4% in 1986, and 6.4% in 1989.

Hypothesis ten states that as satellite dailies' Sunday penetration within a county increases, the penetration of weeklies will decrease. Just as with metro dailies, a positive, relationship was found between these two variables. The beta weights in Table 3 equalled .215 in 1980, .276 in 1983, .299 in 1986, and .372 in 1989. The amount of variance in weeklies' penetrations uniquely associated with the Sunday penetration of satellite dailies was 2.3% in 1980, 2.8% in 1983, 1.8% in 1986, and 4.7% in 1989.

Hypothesis eleven states that as weeklies' penetration within a county increases, the Sunday penetration of metro dailies will decrease. This hypothesis was not supported. However, a positive relationship between these two variables was found. The beta weights from Table 3 equalled .215 in 1980, .327 in 1983, .236 in 1986, and .216 in 1989. The amount of variance in the Sunday penetration of metro dailies uniquely associated with the penetration of weeklies was 4.1% in 1980, 9.5% in 1983, 5% in

1986, and 4.2% in 1989.

Hypothesis twelve states that as weeklies' penetration within a county increases, the Sunday penetration of satellite dailies will decrease. This hypothesis was not supported. The beta weights from Table 3 were .124 in 1980, .129 in 1983, .094 in 1986, and .142 in 1989. The amount of variance in satellite dailies' Sunday penetration uniquely associated with weeklies penetration ranged from .8% in 1986 to 1.8% in 1989.

Change across time

Hypothesis thirteen states that the strength of metro daily layer's impact on other layers will decline across time, compared to the impact of weeklies and satellite dailies on other layers. This hypothesis was supported partially for daily and Sunday penetration. Using the percentages of variance reported in Table 2, no important impact of metro dailies' county penetration was found for weeklies' penetration. The relationship between metro and satellite dailies remained fairly stable from 1980 to 1986, but dropped significantly in 1989. This was similar to the impact of satellite dailies' penetration on metro dailies' penetration. It increased from 1980 to 1986, but then declined in 1989. The impact of weeklies' penetration on satellite dailies penetration, and vice versa, grew during the period of study.

The hypothesis for Sunday penetration was supported partially. The negative impact of metro Sunday penetration on satellite dailies' penetration remained stable for the first three years, but increased in 1989. The variation of impact was not as great as the impact of satellite dailies' Sunday penetration on metro dailies' Sunday penetration. However, the variance accounted for increased consistently during this period of time.

## Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore the impact of newspapers in various layers of the umbrella model on newspapers in other layers. In general, the competition was most intense between satellite dailies and weeklies for weekday penetration. This competition increased during the 1980s, with satellite dailies having slightly more of an impact on weeklies than vice versa. By 1989, almost a third of the penetration of weeklies and satellite dailies was related. This suggests that many readers consider these two types of newspapers to be acceptable substitutes.

The relationship between satellite dailies and weeklies is not surprising. It is consistent with Rosse's prediction that competition primarily moves down the umbrella layers. However, the strength of the relationship was greater than expected.

While the relationship between weekly newspaper and weekday satellite daily penetration was negative, the opposite was true for satellite dailies's Sunday and weeklies' penetrations. As satellite dailies' Sunday penetration increased, weeklies' penetration increased. The weeklies and Sunday editions were complements, not substitutes. This implies that some readers probably were reading a weekly and a satellite daily Sunday edition in lieu of a daily subscriptions to a satellite daily.

The relationship between metro dailies and satellite dailies was not as strong as that between satellite dailies and weeklies, but it was noteworthy. Satellite dailies' weekday and Sunday penetrations had a strong negative impact on metro dailies' weekday and Sunday penetrations, but not vice versa. The relationship for weekday penetration grew in strength during the first three years, but it dropped noticeably in strength in 1989.

The decline in the relationship between satellite and metro dailies weekday penetration in 1989 may be a result of the battle between the Detroit News and Detroit Free Press to dominate the Detroit and Michigan market. The battle intensified when Gannett bought the News in 1985. Both newspapers discounted circulation and advertising prices and began to circulate more extensively throughout the state. In 1983, only 21 of 80 counties had both Detroit newspapers with 5% or more penetration. By 1986, the total was 31 counties, and by 1989, the total reached 53 counties. Even though the two papers had applied for a joint operating agreement in 1986, they both continued to build outstate circulation. The average metro penetration grew during this period from 10.8% to 13.1%.

The expansion of the Detroit dailies would seem to indicate an increase in the impact of metro dailies. This would be the case if people were dropping the satellite dailies to buy the the metro dailies. However, if the low prices were attracting people to buy the metro in addition to the satellite daily, this would result in a lower negative correlation. To test this explanation one would need to examine the penetration for 1992, after the JOA was implemented and subscription prices increased.

While the weekday relationship declined in 1989, the relationship between Sunday editions grew throughout the decade. By 1989, satellite dailies' Sunday penetration was negatively related to about 28% of the Sunday penetration of metro dailies. This was an increase from about 20% in 1980. On the other hand, metro dailies' Sunday penetration was negatively related to only about 16% of the satellite dailies' Sunday penetration, which was an increase from 13% in 1980. This suggests that the satellite daily Sunday editions are more appealing to readers than the metro Sunday editions, but as many as 16% of the readers in 1989 considered the metro Sunday editions an acceptable alternative to a satellite daily Sunday edition.

The relationship between weeklies and metro dailies was practically non-existent during the week. They were not substitutes. However, an interesting result was found with weeklies and metro Sundays. The two were positively related, as was the case with weeklies and satellite dailies' Sunday penetration. Metro dailies and weeklies also were complements. The strength of the relationship was stronger for the metro Sunday editions than for the satellite Sunday editions.

## Conclusions

This study of the Michigan newspaper industry from 1980 to 1989 supports the existence of intense umbrella competition outside of metropolitan areas. Competition was greatest between satellite dailies and weeklies during the week, followed by competition between Sunday metro and satellite dailies, and competition between weekday editions of metro and satellite dailies. Metro dailies and weeklies had no significant relationship during the week, but Sunday editions were complements for weeklies for a small proportion of readers.

The stronger impact of satellite dailies on metro dailies rather than vice versa is consistent with Rosse's prediction that satellite dailies would take on more functions of metro dailies. Yet metro average penetration in the counties increased during the decade, while average satellite daily penetration declined. This may indicate that the information functions of metro dailies' had yet to be taken over by satellite dailies, as hypothesized.

The relationship between weeklies and satellite dailies, which grew throughout the period, was not surprising, but the impact was greater than expected. Rosse predicted that competition would be stronger downward than upward, but this was only partially true. It may be that readers do not distinguish between dailies and weeklies to the degree that journalists and scholars do. If weeklies provide a good local newspaper, they are acceptable substitutes for satellite dailies.

Several other conclusions follow from this study that could be useful in further understanding umbrella competition outside of metropolitan areas. These are:

1. Satellite dailies generally face more intense umbrella competition than other types of newspapers because they have competition from layers both below and above.

2. The competition between metropolitan and satellite dailies appears to be directly related to marketing decisions of metro daily managers. Changes in price and distribution patterns affected intensity of competition.

3. Weeklies and Sunday editions of dailies serve as complements for a small percentage of the readers.

4. Market size was not related to penetration of any type

of newspaper during the week, but it was positively related to penetration of the Sunday edition of satellite dailies.

5. Competition during the week among layers differed in intensity compared to competition among the layers on Sunday.

While this study has some interesting implications for the umbrella model, it is also limited. It deals only with Michigan newspapers during the 1980s. Generalizations cannot be drawn for other geographic areas. However, there seems to be no reason to assume the relationships found here would be unique to Michigan. The study remains worthwhile because it applies the umbrella model across time to a wider geographic area than has been done in the past.

## ENDNOTES

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18. The Standard Rate & Data Service (SRDS) data came from the Audit Bureau of Circulation and from sworn statements filed with the Standard Rate and Data Service. While the exact dates for the circulation data varied, most of the data represent average circulation for the year ending in the September before the year of publication. For example, most of the data in the 1984-1985 edition, which was published in 1984, came from September 1983.

19. Lacy, 1984, _op_. _cit_.

20. See Stephen Lacy and Frederick Fico, "The Link Between Newspaper Content Quality and Circulation," _Newspaper Research Journal_, Spring 1991, pp. 46-57.

21. See Jacon Cohen and Patricia Cohen, _Applied Multiple Regression Analysis for the Behavioral Sciences_ (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1975), pp. 67-70. The coefficient of variation for households was 1.07 for 1980, 1.31 for 1983 and 1.55 for 1986. The coefficient of variation for satellite daily penetration was 1.55 for 1980, 1.53 for 1983, and 1.52 for 1986. The coefficient of variation for metro daily penetration was 2.45 for 1980, 1.71 for 1983, and 1.98 for 1986. The coefficient of variation for weekly penetration was 1.2 for 1980, 1.19 for 1983,

and 1.21 for 1986.

As an additional check, regressions were run for 1983, 1986 and 1989 penetration data using the penetration data from three years earlier as the independent measures. For example, the dependent variable would be penetration of weeklies in 1983 and the independent variables would be penetration of satellite dailies and metro dailies in 1980. The relationships among the variables using this procedure were consistent with those found in tables 1 through 4.

22. Five variables were found to have skewed distributions, primarily due to outliers, which were defined as cases more than three standard deviations from the mean. The variables were penetration of weeklies in 1980, penetration of metro dailies in 1980, and number of households in 1980, 1983 and 1986. Only one or two cases were outliers for each variable. These outliers were reassigned the value of three standard deviations from the mean, and the distributions became less skewed.

In addition, the standardized predicted values from the regressions were plotted against the standardized residuals to check for failure of assumptions of normality, linearity and homoscedasticity of residuals. No failures of assumptions were observed. For more detail about the assumptions of regression analysis, see Barbara G. Tabachnick and Linda S. Fidell, Using Multivariate Statistic, 1st. ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1983), pp. 91-95.

## TABLE 1

### Regressions for Relationship Among Penetration of Metropolitan Dailies, Satellite Dailies and Weeklies

| | INDEPENDENT VARIABLE BETA WEIGHTS | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| DEPENDENT VARIABLES | Metro Daily Pent. | Satellite Daily Pent. | Weekly Pent. | Households in County | Adjusted R Squared |
| 1989 Metro Daily Pent. | NA | -.344 | .043 | .022 | .101 |
| 1989 Sat. Daily Pent. | -.189 | NA | -.594 | .338 | .506 |
| 1989 Weekly Penetration | .026 | -.651 | NA | -.082 | .459 |
| 1986 Metro Daily Pent. | NA | -.613 | -.145 | .101 | .214 |
| 1986 Sat. Daily Pent. | -.295 | NA | -.622 | .113 | .622 |
| 1986 Weekly Penetration | -.085 | -.754 | NA | -.077 | .541 |
| 1983 Metro Daily Pent. | NA | -.581 | -.016 | .147 | .261 |
| 1983 Sat. Daily Pent. | -.318 | NA | -.556 | .142 | .595 |
| 1983 Weekly Penetration | -.011 | -.686 | NA | -.099 | .500 |
| 1980 Metro Daily Pent. | NA | -.427 | -.024 | .120 | .127 |
| 1980 Sat. Daily Pent. | -.282 | NA | -.518 | .094 | .423 |
| 1980 Weekly Penetration | -.017 | -.564 | NA | -.181 | .372 |

N for all equations equals 80.

Note: The measures of penetration used for the independent variables came from the same year as the measure of the dependent variable. For example, the measures for satellite daily and weekly penetration used in the 1986 metro daily penetration equation came from 1986.

Sat. means satellite; pent. means penetration.

## TABLE 2

### Percentage of Unique Variance in Penetration in One Layer Accounted for by Penetration in Other Layers

| Independent Variable | Dependent Variable | 1980 | 1983 | 1986 | 1989 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Metro Daily | Sat. Daily | 7.6 | 8.8 | 8.1 | 3.3 |
| Sat. Daily | Metro Daily | 11.5 | 16.1 | 16.7 | 6.1 |
| Metro Daily | Weekly | >0.0 | >0.0 | 0.5 | >0.0 |
| Sat. Daily | Weekly | 24.9 | 29.6 | 38.9 | 32.8 |
| Weekly | Metro Daily | >0.0 | 1.9 | 0.9 | >0.0 |
| Weekly | Sat. Daily | 22.9 | 23.9 | 32.1 | 30.0 |

## TABLE 3

## Regressions for Relationship Among Penetration of Sunday Editions of Metropolitan Dailies, Sunday Editions of Satellite Dailies and Weeklies

| | INDEPENDENT VARIABLE BETA WEIGHTS | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| DEPENDENT VARIABLES | Metro Daily Pent. | Satellite Daily Pent. | Weekly Pent. | Households in County | Adjusted R Squared |
| 1989 Metro Sunday Pent. | NA | -.765 | .216 | .240 | .425 |
| 1989 Sat. Sunday Pent. | -.443 | NA | .142 | .593 | .667 |
| 1989 Weekly Penetration | .327 | .372 | NA | -.449 | .132 |
| 1986 Metro Sunday Pent. | NA | -.718 | .236 | .391 | .314 |
| 1986 Sat. Sunday Pent. | -.385 | NA | .094 | .669 | .633 |
| 1986 Weekly Penetration | .222 | .299 | NA | -.418 | .132 |
| 1983 Metro Sunday Pent. | NA | -.674 | .327 | .290 | .390 |
| 1983 Sat. Sunday Pent. | -.414 | NA | .129 | .627 | .625 |
| 1983 Weekly Penetration | .427 | .276 | NA | -.401 | .205 |
| 1980 Metro Sunday Pent. | NA | -.579 | .215 | .257 | .239 |
| 1980 Sat. Sunday Pent. | -.383 | NA | .124 | .588 | .496 |
| 1980 Weekly Penetration | .247 | .215 | NA | -.417 | .124 |

N for all equations equals 80.

Note: The measures of penetration used for the independent variables came from the same year as the measure of the dependent variable. For example, the measures for satellite daily and weekly penetration used in the 1986 metro daily penetration equation came from 1986.

Sat. means satellite; pent. means penetration.

TABLE 4

Percentage of Unique Variance in Sunday Penetration in One Layer

Accounted for by Penetration in Other Layer

| Independent Variable | Dependent Variable | 1980 | 1983 | 1986 | 1989 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Metro Daily | Sat. Daily | 13.8 | 13.9 | 13.5 | 16.4 |
| Weekly | Sat. Daily | 1.3 | 1.3 | 0.8 | 1.8 |
| Sat. Daily | Metro Daily | 20.1 | 22.7 | 25.0 | 28.3 |
| Weekly | Metro Daily | 4.1 | 9.5 | 5.0 | 4.2 |
| Metro Daily | Weekly | 4.7 | 12.3 | 6.4 | 6.4 |
| Sat. Daily | Weekly | 2.3 | 2.8 | 1.8 | 4.7 |

# Employee Ownership at Milwaukee and Cincinnati:

## A Study in Success and Failure

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# Employee Ownership at Milwaukee and Cincinnati: A Study in Success and Failure

On May 25, 1937, the Journal Company of Milwaukee split its stock 100:1 and offered a portion of the resulting shares to its employees. In this offering, workers at The Milwaukee Journal could buy a piece of their employer for $35 a share until employees acquired an aggregate of 30,000 shares or 15% of the company. As the Journal prospered, more shares became available to staff. Workers owned more than half The Journal Company in 1947; and in 1962, 1,039 employees controlled 72.5% of the stock. By January 31, 1978, Journal employees owned 90% of the company. Employee ownership of The Milwaukee Journal proved effective in its first decade and grew stronger in succeeding years. Conrad, Wilson, and Wilson[1] and Severin[2] described successes of employee ownership at Milwaukee.

Little noticed, however, is another employee ownership venture, modeled largely on the Milwaukee plan. In 1952, workers at The Cincinnati Enquirer bought that newspaper rather than become employees of the Taft owned Cincinnati Times-Star. The Cincinnati venture blossomed in the spring and summer of 1952, flourished for three years, then died. The shareholders' report for the fiscal year ended September 30, 1955, recorded that employee ownership had produced the most prosperous year in Enquirer history.[3] That report issued in December. In less than five months, however, ownership of the Enquirer fell into the hands of another Cincinnati competitor, Scripps-Howard, Inc. The Cincinnati employee ownership "experiment" was over.[4]

The intent of employee ownership in both Milwaukee and Cincinnati was to preserve local independence and to maintain diversity in an age of declining numbers of daily newspapers and media owners.[5] Comparison of the two employee ownership ventures--one modeled after the other--provides insights into why one collapsed and the other survived. By comparing the two ventures, this study seeks to identify conditions that distinguish the successful employee ownership plan from the unsuccessful. The primary focus is upon the less studied and shorter lived employee ownership of the Cincinnati Enquirer and how a seemingly successful employee ownership fell apart.

The methods of this study are historical. Unpublished manuscripts provide many details of the Enquirer venture. Interviews with surviving leaders of the Enquirer employee ownership experiment combined with reviews of contemporary accounts in the trade and popular press help flesh out a model of the later scheme and its failings. Understanding the collapse of the Enquirer venture against a backdrop of the more successful plan it was intended to emulate helps answer the question why one employee ownership plan worked and the other failed. That understanding should benefit management, employee owners, and scholars.

## THE MILWAUKEE MODEL

Employees at the Milwaukee Journal were beneficiaries of both Lucius Nieman and Harry J. Grant. Nieman owned 55% of the Journal when he died in 1935. His will expressed the desires that the Journal remain independent and that it not be sold to outside interests merely because they were the highest bidders. Harry J. Grant, who owned 20% of the company at Nieman's death, conceived the Milwaukee employee stock ownership plan (ESOP). Grant prevailed upon the Nieman heirs and the heirs of Nieman's business partner, L.T. Boyd, to offer employees first a minority interest in the company, and gradually, a controlling interest.[6]

The aim of the Journal ESOP was to create a manageable mechanism of employee participation in company ownership while protecting the rights of all interests in the company. In 1943, as employees continued to purchase more of the company, Grant established a twenty-four member employees' council made up of four elected representatives from each of six departmental divisions:

1) advertising and promotions
2) circulation
3) editorial
4) business office
5) mechanical
6) radio and television

Terms on the council lasted two years. Company executives could not serve on the council, but they could vote to elect representatives. By annual election, employee shareholders named six members of the employee council to one-year terms on the Journal Company's board of directors.

John Donald Ferguson, president of the company at the time, explained that stock was allotted so "that no single group and no possible combinations of two or three groups, including the executive group, could control the company."[7]

The Journal Employes'[8] Stock Trust actually held the company shares. Stock allocated to employees could not be sold outside the employee "family." Share holders who left the Journal Company employ had to sell their "units of beneficial interest" back to the Trust. Otherwise, employee owners enjoyed all the rights of traditional common stock holders.

## THE CINCINNATI VENTURE

In Cincinnati, a self proclaimed "conspiracy" of five editorial and one advertising staff persons led by columnist Jim Ratliff in 1952 inspired more than 500 employees to invest at least $1,000 each to buy the Cincinnati Enquirer.[9] In creating the new Cincinnati Enquirer Company, the employee group decided early to learn from the Milwaukee experience[10] and met with publisher Irwin Maier[11] at the Milwaukee Journal, probably during the first weeks of March.[12] Several elements of the Journal plan were copied.

Before Enquirer employees owned a stake in the company, a twenty-four member employees committee purported to represent interests of all departments in forming the new company. This committee (see Exhibit 1) met frequently during the spring of 1952 as a steering committee to consider options open to employees in their two major quests. First they had to gain recognition of the Federal District Court in Washington D.C. as legitimate bidders for purchase of the company.[13] Second, and closely related to the first quest, employees had to find a way to finance purchase of the $7.6 million newspaper. The early steering committee of twenty-four succeeded in both quests. On April 8, 1953, ten months after the court approved a sale to Enquirer employees, the new company formally established a thirty member Employee Advisory Board (see Exhibit 2) charged with the responsibility of studying operations of the newspaper under employee ownership.[14]

By the end of the year, the EAB had responsibility to conduct elections among employee shareholders for three employee representatives to serve on the company's board of directors. These three employee board members had the charge of representing employee interests on a five member Voting Trust which controlled 57% of the Enquirer voting stock.[15] In 1952 when the Enquirer became employee owned, Journal employees owned 55% of the Milwaukee company's stock. The Enquirer's pre-incorporation employee steering committee and its successor EAB thus echoed the Journal's employee council with similar size, composition, and purpose. The Enquirer's Employees Voting Trust likewise appeared to emulate the Journal Employes' Stock Trust.

## ENQUIRER SUCCESSES

Openly emulating the Milwaukee ESOP, employee ownership at Cincinnati technically began on September 30, 1952. On that date, Publisher Roger Ferger paid $7.6 million to Cyrus Eaton of Portsmouth Steel Co. for the newspaper. Enquirer employees had raised the money in part through a private stock offering to employees and a public stock offering to the greater Cincinnati community. They took on $6 million in debt through sale of $3.5 million in secured bonds and $2.5 million in junior debentures underwritten by Halsey, Stuart & Co. of New York and Chicago. Eaton and Portsmouth Steel under contract with the Enquirer employee group had bought the newspaper from American Security and Trust Co. in June, the result of a court-approved arrangement. In court, Indianapolis publisher Gene Pulliam had predicted that Cincinnati employees would "lose every cent they have in [the Enquirer]."[16] However, employee-owners at the Enquirer would prove Pulliam wrong in the years following the employee takeover.

The company's annual report for the year which ended September 30, 1955, declared net earnings for the three years of $1,084,000 "after the payment of some $1,166,000 in interest and other costs of borrowed money, ... taxes ... of about

$1,225,500," and $897,000 depreciation."[17] In August, 1955 the _Enquirer_ paid off--seven years ahead of schedule--$1 million of convertible debentures owned since 1952 by H.L. Stuart of Halsey, Stuart & Co.

For all three years under employee ownership the _Enquirer_ ranked among the top twenty newspapers in the United States in terms of advertising linage, something it had not done since World War II.[18] Circulation also increased dramatically.[19]

Employee ownership worked so well for the _Enquirer_ that both _The Wall Street Journal_[20] and _Barron's_ magazine[21] published articles on the success of the venture. _Tide_ magazine declared the venture a triumph after employee ownership's first year.[22] The business and trade press reported the _Cincinnati Enquirer_ under employee ownership was winning the circulation and advertising battles against the Taft owned _Cincinnati Times-Star_ and Scripps-Howard's _Cincinnati Post_. Company financial statements confirmed greater earnings. Stockholders received dividends during the first years of the new company, despite being told at the outset dividends would be minimal.[23] Company debt was being retired ahead of schedule. Employees, stockholders and management appeared to be happy with the new order. Appearances suggested all was well with the employee owned _Cincinnati Enquirer_. Late in the fall of 1955, those appearances changed.

## PUBLIC WARFARE

Cincinnati's afternoon papers (the Post and the Times-Star) barked the news in 36-point headlines on November 19, 1955. Widely acclaimed as the "savior" of the Cincinnati Enquirer,[24] Jim Ratliff had been ousted as vice president and treasurer of the Cincinnati Enquirer Co., Inc. All of Cincinnati knew that something was amiss on Vine Street. At a meeting on November 18, nine of the Enquirer company's twelve directors voted to strip Ratliff of the posts he had held since the founding of the company on June 5, 1952. Director Will McGrath was in Europe, Joel M. Bowlby was not able to attend, and Ratliff, of course, opposed the action.[25]

The board's action precipitated open conflict between factions of the Enquirer company--conflict which appeared almost daily in competing Cincinnati newspapers for nine weeks,[26] warranted major coverage in the trade press,[27] captured headlines in the New York Times,[28] and resulted in feature stories in Business Week,[29] Time,[30] and Newsweek.[31] The Associated Press wired copy on the event to its subscribers,[32] and the Wall Street Journal reported the feud.[33]

At meetings in Cincinnati hotels and theaters during ensuing weeks, Enquirer company factions recited their respective grievances before hundreds of Enquirer employees, shareholders, and journalists for Cincinnati's afternoon dailies. Ratliff adherents leveled accusations of mismanagement, betrayal, and profligate spending which publisher Roger Ferger answered with charges of sabotage, revolution, and misunderstanding.

Open struggle for control of The Cincinnati Enquirer concluded--at least symbolically--on April 26, 1956. On that date Scripps-Howard paid $4,059,000 for $1,476,000 in Enquirer convertible debentures,[34] which represented 36% of the company's outstanding shares. Information revealed in the course of that battle for control of the Enquirer sheds much light on what went wrong with an otherwise successful venture in employee ownership.

Ratliff, Enquirer City Editor Jack Cronin, and others spoke at public meetings on behalf of employee shareholder interests. Ferger, Assistant Publisher Eugene Duffield, and some members of the Enquirer Board of Directors spoke for management.

After being rebuffed on at least two occasions[35] in his attempts to tell Enquirer employees at staff-only meetings his version of his dispute with Enquirer management, Ratliff called a series of three public meetings[36] at the Hotel Metropole on November 25, 1955. There, he charged Ferger and Duffield with padding expense accounts and inflating management perks and bonuses for themselves at the expense of the company. He said Ferger had betrayed the trust of employees on at least two fronts. First, Ferger had secretly entered into merger discussions with representatives of the Times-Star Company after Enquirer employees had fought so hard to maintain independence. Second, Ratliff observed that while rank-and-file employees had mortgaged their homes, worked harder, and made other sacrifices to make the Enquirer successful after the employee purchase, Ferger and Duffield had continued business as usual.[37]

On December 4 Ferger conducted a public meeting at the Cox Theater. Prior to the meeting he dismissed City Editor Cronin and suspended Ratliff from the Enquirer staff. With the Enquirer board of directors on stage behind him, Ferger read from a twenty-page, single-spaced, legal-sized document which he had mimeographed for all present. "The setting was designed to intimidate," Enquirer reporter and WSAI radio commentator Al Schottelkotte recalled. "All the political clout and financial power of Cincinnati," represented by the board of directors, in tableau above and behind Ferger.[38] Ferger answered Ratliff's charges, branding the deposed vice president's ten-page statement "as, for the most part, reckless disregard for accuracy [and] ... inexcusable."[39] He reminded all present that the last three years had been the most successful in Enquirer history. He said this was the main reason for his high salary.

He responded to the charges of excess compensation by revealing that he and Duffield had been paid $429,125 in salary, bonuses, and expenses over the last three years. The Post added parenthetically that the company had additionally paid $8,076 per year into Ferger's pension fund and $5,051 into Duffield's for fiscal 1954-55.[40] Editor & Publisher printed a chart on December 10 which included such items as dues (which for Ferger were $8,338.22 for the three years), entertainment, travel, and out-of-pocket expenses. The aggregate compensation shown in the trade magazine for the three years was $342,389.46 for Ferger and $178,228.57 for Duffield -- a total of $520,618.03.[41]

To Ratliff's charge that Ferger and Duffield were unjustly trying to control the _Enquirer_, the publisher responded that when the employees were looking for financial backing in 1952, all potential backers insisted on a continuity in _Enquirer_ management. He said he had insisted as two of the terms of his contract with the company that "I be assured of at least five years of uninterrupted control of the management of the corporation" and

> that my compensation formula and autonomy should remain exactly the same as it had been while the paper was under the American Security & Trust Company with one exception, that is, that I be given the option to purchase at least 1,000 shares for each year of my contract, or a total of 10,000 shares of stock at $10 a share.[42]

The publisher claimed that Cyrus Eaton of Portsmouth Steel had insisted on the ten-year contract. Ferger also claimed that H.L. Stuart of Halsey, Stuart & Co. had guaranteed Ferger his stock options and insisted on several provisions in Ferger's contract which were now under scrutiny. Armed with two letters from Stuart dated November 30 and December 1 and refuting Ferger's claims, Ratliff sought to discredit the publisher.[43] Under questioning from printer

Chester Davis, Ferger said he had been considering a ceiling on his salary-bonus arrangement.[44]

Ferger confirmed he had talked in December 1953 and in January and February of 1954 with Times-Star principals about the possibility of some kind of joint operating agreement. The publisher said the talks were precipitated by notice of a 30% increase in rent at the Enquirer building when the lease expired in 1956.[45] Ferger added that when Times-Star officials insisted on arrangements which would make the Enquirer operation subservient, he broke off discussions.

Enquirer chairman Joel M. Bowlby, also board chairman of the Eagle Picher Co., presided at the meeting and represented the board. When Ferger had concluded his presentation, Bowlby "counted off the men on the board" who included industrialist Powel Crosley Jr., Harold LeBlond, Will McGrath, Carl Jacobs, and James D. Shouse. Bowlby asked the crowd:

> Can you believe that these men would permit themselves to be dominated by any individual; that they would breach a faith assumed when they accepted membership on the board of your company?
>
> If he [Mr. Ratliff] couldn't be loyal; if he couldn't subscribe to the policies of the board and its management; in short -- if he couldn't play as a member of the team, he should have resigned.[46]

Ratliff's unwillingness to "play as a member of the team," and repeated questioning of Ferger's management choices, raised the issue, Ferger suggested, of whether as president of the corporation he could make decisions "free from interference and sabotage" of his junior officer, Ratliff. He asked if he needed to submit all his decisions to Ratliff, whom he described as a man lacking executive experience. He said this would put him in a position in which he would "constantly be threatened by him [Ratliff] that if my judgment did not meet with his approval, he would begin a revolution among employees."[47] Ferger thus acknowledged that Ratliff had significant support among employees. Ferger observed that late in 1955 there were only 529 employee-shareholders and that there were 3,693 other shareholders accounting for 71 percent of the stock. He said those interests had to be considered in running the company.

With Ratliff giving his views in public, and Ferger responding in public, employees and other shareholders by the scores chose sides for a battle getting more intense each week. Newspapers and the trade press continued to cover the feud.

Amid a heated proxy battle, Ratliff received the most votes at the annual board of directors election in January. Only by pooling ballots in a cumulative voting process was management able to secure two contested seats.[48] A February audit at least partially vindicated Ratliff's charges of Ferger's financial mismanagement.[49] Still, Ratliff and Cronin remained without jobs at the Enquirer. As the feud continued into the spring, Hal Stuart announced his convertible debentures were for sale to the highest bidder.[50]

An eight-column front page banner in The Cincinnati Post on April 26 proclaimed Scripps-Howard had outbid three other contenders: the Times-Star, the Chicago Tribune, and Edward Lamb Associates of Toledo. The Scripps-Howard bid of $4,059,000 easily outdistanced the Times-Star bid of $2,380,051 and gave it 36 percent of the Enquirer shares when the debentures were converted to stock.[51] By paying what amounted to $27.50 per share for 147,600 shares and publicly offering to buy more, Scripps-Howard forced the price of Enquirer stock well above its $10 par value. On the day the bids for Stuart's debentures were opened, Enquirer stock traded over the counter for $12 per share.[52] That, combined with the dividends paid on the common stock assured that employee and community investors profited from the Enquirer's success.

## DISCUSSION

The public battle for control of the Enquirer which led to demise of that company's employee ownership underscores a fundamental difference between the two plans. The Milwaukee plan was a top-down scheme from the beginning with existing management and owners in the person of Harry Grant gradually turning ownership over to employees in a decades-long process.

By contrast, inception of the Enquirer plan was bottom-up, employee interests often at odds with management. Instead of being a gradual process of turning control over to employees over several years, the Cincinnati Enquirer Co. was slammed together on June 5, 1952, and fine-tuned generally to management's advantage in the months which followed. One reporter summarized creation of the Enquirer ESOP as the result of "a series of frantic financial moves [in which] the employes' group was able at the last minute to offer $7.6 million in cash for the paper."[53]

The moves were frantic in part because persons in a position to help the employees did not take them or their cause very seriously. Bob Taft Jr., attorney for the Times-Star, recalled 38 years later that the general consensus in Cincinnati was that the employees didn't have a prayer of raising the $7.5 million required to match the Taft offer.[54] Advertising promotions director Joel Irwin even suggested "At the beginning we [Enquirer employees] didn't think we had the resources or the ability to handle it ourselves." Irwin said that the result was Ratliff "went around flailing about the Midwest seeking someone to help us."[55]

When financial backing did appear likely, it came only as the Washington, D.C. District Court imposed strict deadlines on "all offers" for the Enquirer during a series of turbulent hearings in May. Faced with a court ultimatum that required all arrangements be finalized in less than two days, attorneys hastily drew up the original corporate structure of the employee owned Enquirer during an all-night meeting June 3-4, 1952. In that all-night session attorneys also had to draw up documents which assured newsprint, wire service, and other contracts would be honored under the new ownership.[56]

Financial exigencies required that sale of the Enquirer be made to Portsmouth Steel, a holding company owned primarily by industrialist Cyrus Eaton. Separate contracts spelled out Portsmouth's interest in the company and the process whereby employees would buy out Portsmouth after raising money first through a stock sale. When $2.5 million in stock was sold, Halsey-Stuart & Co. agreed they would underwrite $6 million in bonds. Amid the frantic maneuvering to assemble all necessary contracts so that both American Security & Trust Co. and the court would approve sale to the employee organization, attorneys prepared no instrument guaranteeing employees would keep their power. Ratliff quipped years later, "we [the employees] needed attorneys to protect us from our attorneys."[57] The attorney who had been assigned to employees in the early stages of the employee ownership quest was Frank Dale. Dale was employed by Frost & Jacobs who in turn was retained by American Security & Trust as owners of the Enquirer. When the court allowed employees to become bidders in competition with the deal agreed to by the trust company and the Tafts, Dale was placed in difficult position. After Dale and attorney (and former Senator) Millard Tydings got the employees into the bidding, Carl Jacobs told Dale he had to back out. Still, Dale and other Frost and Jacobs attorneys played principle roles in drawing up the documents which created the new Enquirer company.[58]

Thus aside from a few weeks in the summer of 1952 when Cyrus Eaton nominally owned the Enquirer as the employees' representative, employees never controlled the newspaper. Tide magazine observed in 1953 that the Enquirer Employee Advisory Board had "no power except to suggest."[59] Its function was advisory only.

What developed from the beginning was a struggle between two powerful personalities--Ferger and Ratliff. Described by DeCamp as "imperious,"[60] Publisher Ferger set about stacking the board of directors and other company structures in his favor even before the new company formed. First, legal counsel for the Enquirer throughout the process was provided by the Cincinnati firm of Frost and Jacobs. Senior Partner Carl Jacobs was a close friend of Ferger's. Original company structure for the employee-owned Enquirer was hammered out over night June 4-5 by attorneys.[61] On June 16, City Editor Jack Cronin and Advertising Director Stan Ferger (the publisher's brother) resigned from the board of directors to make room for Publisher Roger Ferger and his assistant, Gene Duffield.[62] On July 11, the board of directors expanded from seven to twelve members (see Exhibit 3). The new members included "a number of influential citizens of the city," the Enquirer wrote.[63] It is noteworthy that these "influential citizens" joined the Enquirer board on the same day Republicans meeting in Chicago ended Senator Robert Taft's presidential aspirations -- their association with a bunch of upstart employees who had opposed a Taft takeover had been defused in Chicago. Ostensibly added to provide management experience, the "influential citizens" were social and business affiliates of publisher Ferger.[64] It is also clear from accounts of Employee Advisory Board meetings given in monthly issues of Your Voice in the Enquirer that Ferger dominated even that body.

Opposed to the "imperious" Ferger was Ratliff, a brilliant, charismatic former Counter Intelligence Corps officer seen as champion of the common worker and chief architect of the employee ownership scheme at the Enquirer. As a CIC officer in Europe, Ratliff had been assigned to investigate the plot to kill Hitler.[65] Ratliff had used his CIC expertise to investigate during 1949 and then to write a series of articles early in 1950 exposing communists in the Cincinnati area. His articles ran in the Sunday _Enquirer_ on six successive weeks beginning February 12, 1950. The articles were the talk of Cincinnati, and had Ratliff much in demand as a speaker about town. He was a strong, charismatic individual adept at mobilizing people behind a common cause. He had great popular support among _Enquirer_ employees and in the Cincinnati community.

Powerful individuals at cross purposes in a company, each with influential followings as Ratliff and Ferger had, almost certainly spelled trouble. More than three decades later, Ratliff observed that the employee ownership at the _Enquirer_:

> was special because we had people on the business side "just working at a job" who had nothing in common with the disoriented idealists who ... [comprise] a typical news staff. It is an interesting juxtaposition.[66]

To bring together in joint harness pragmatists and idealists, creative temperaments and productive, requires firm architecture and adherence to the architect's design. At a minimum in Cincinnati, disparate interests lacked a common vision of what an employee-owned newspaper should be. Neither did there exist an enduring instrument to insure employees at the _Cincinnati Enquirer_ would continue to reap the benefits of ownership.

Other mechanical distinctions can be made between the two ESOPs. Whereas _Journal_ stock allocated for employees could not be sold outside the "_Journal_ family," _Enquirer_ employees faced no such restriction.

In creating the _Enquirer_ company, Cincinnati employees had to fight in court for the right even to make an offer. They went into debt to secure that offer. Employees sold $2.5 million in debentures to H.L. Stuart of Halsey-Stuart Co. Those debentures were convertible to common stock, with voting privileges. Leveraging the employee purchase with debentures convertible to common stock meant employee ownership and control was vulnerable to any well-financed takeover attempt. And while employee ownership interests at the _Enquirer_ had the support of H.L. Stuart through 1955, continued dissension at the _Enquirer_ made the debentures less attractive to the financier who was interested in the investment, not in running the newspaper. The conditions under which the Cincinnati company was organized and financed ultimately provided the avenue through which Scripps-Howard gained control of the stock.

If comparison between the Cincinnati and the Milwaukee ESOPs is any indication, it appears that for newspaper (or any other) employees to gain lasting control of a company they need some friendly forces on the inside of the existing power structure. Instruments need to be set in place which then guarantee true employee power. Participation and ownership, as the _Enquirer_ experience teaches, do not guarantee control.

## EXHIBIT 1

## The Employee Committee

The employee "Committee to Save the Enquirer" had twenty-four members. It became the core of the committee to represent employee interests with company board of directors.

| **MEMBER**[1] | **DEPARTMENT**[2] |
|---|---|
| Fred Barnes | Business Office |
| Harry Clark | Engraving |
| John F. Cronin | City Editor |
| Edward Dollreihs | Circulation |
| Stanley A. Ferger | Advertising |
| A.M. Forkner | Editorial |
| William Fortlage | Composing |
| Wilbur Giese | Counting Room |
| Edward Griesemeyer | |
| George Hauer | Stereotype |
| Albert Imsande | |
| Joel Irwin | Advertising |
| Lawrence Kathman | Composing |
| Paul Lugannani | Editorial |
| Hal Metzger | Editorial |
| Edward Miefert | |
| Lawrence Nash | Circulation |
| Robert O'Dowd | Advertising |
| James H. Ratliff | Editorial |
| Harry C. Rindsberg | Production |
| Charlie Staab | Circulation |
| Joseph Walker | |
| Sid Weiskittel | Printing |
| Marie Wingfield | Office Staff |

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1. Two sources agree on twenty-three members of the committee: Jerry Walker, "Financier's Encouragement Spurs Enquirer's Staff," Editor & Publisher, March 29, 1952, 66, and The Cincinnati Enquirer Employees Committee, "Please Be Patient," poster, April 1952 (used with permission of James H. Ratliff Jr. Cincinnati, Ohio). In a letter, to members of the Employees Committee, date October 3, 1952, (copy in author's possession at Lubbock, Texas)Robert O'Dowd adds Joel Irwin to the list. In telephone interviews during the summer of 1989 Irwin confirmed his membership.

2. Compiled from "Departmental Chairmen Designated for Employees Ownership Drive of April 1952," unsigned, undated memo used with permission of James H. Ratliff, Cincinnati, Ohio, and "Licenses Issued To Workers," Cincinnati Enquirer, August 16, 1952.

## EXHIBIT 2

### The Employee Advisory Board

Formed 8 April 1953, the *Cincinnati Enquirer* Employee Advisory Board had thirty members representing equally the five major divisions of the *Enquirer*--Editorial, advertising, circulation, production and operational.

**EDITORIAL**
Ran Cochran
A.M.Forkner
Bob Husted
Libby Lackman
Hal Metzger, Jr.
E.B. Radcliffe

**ADVERTISING**
Tom Hamilton
Howard Kissel
Joe Pulsford
Orville Snyder
Mary Stoeckle
Jack Tucker

**CIRCULATION**
Charles Carraher
Earl Grossman
Joe Linder
Jack Ryan
Gus Schimpf
Homer Stevens

**PRODUCTION**
Ernie Bloom
Cliff Druck
Ted Faigle
Ted Feldman
Irvin Lang
Loren White

**OPERATIONAL**
Ed Denning
John Hamilton
M.F. Jones
Bob Mains
Charles Paffe
Marie Wingfield

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Sources: "Hal Metzger Elected EAB Chairman," *Your Voice in the Enquirer*, April, 1953, 1 and "Employees Advisory Board," *Your Voice in the Enquirer*, May, 1953, 2.

## EXHIBIT 3

## The Cincinnati Enquirer, Inc. Directors, 1952

Cincinnati Enquirer, Inc. was formed on June 5, 1952 with a temporary board of directors including seven people. In the next six weeks, the makeup of the temporary board changed twice. The net effect at each step was to solidify control of publisher and president Roger H. Ferger. The second change (July 11) brought onto the board Cincinnati business and civic leaders.

| **June 5**[1] | **June 16**[2] | **July 11**[3] |
|---|---|---|
| Fred Barnes | Fred Barnes | |
| | | Joel M. Bowlby |
| John F. Cronin | | |
| | | Powel Crosley Jr. |
| | Eugene S. Duffield | Eugene S. Duffield |
| | Roger H. Ferger | Roger H. Ferger |
| Stanley A. Ferger | | |
| | | William Fortlage[§] |
| Edward J. Helmick | Edward J. Helmick | Edward J. Helmick[*] |
| | | Carl M. Jacobs |
| | | Harold R. LeBlond |
| | | William L. McGrath |
| Charles G. Puchta Jr. | Charles G. Puchta Jr. | |
| | | James H. Ratliff Jr. |
| | | Walter S. Schmidt |
| | | James D, Shouse |
| Charles W. Staab | Charles W. Staab | Charles W. Staab[§] |
| Frank E. Wood | Frank E. Wood | Frank E. Wood[*] |

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1. "Charter is Filed," Cincinnati Enquirer, June 6, 1952.

2. "Duffield Is Named Executive Vice President," Cincinnati Enquirer, June 17, 1952.

3. "Business, Civic Leaders Added to Board of Directors," Cincinnati Enquirer, July 13,1952.

[*] Helmick and Wood represented Portsmouth Steel on the Board of Directors and were to be replaced by employee representatives as soon as Portsmouth Steel's $7.6 million loan was paid off.

[§] Bill Fortlage and Charlie Staab were elected employee representatives on the board. Their voting terms did not begin until Portsmouth Steel was paid and its representatives retired.

NOTES

1. Will C. Conrad, Kathleen F. Wilson, and Dale Wilson, *The Milwaukee Journal: The first Eighty Years* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1964), 180.

2. Werner J. Severin, "The Milwaukee *Journal*: Employee-Owned Prizewinner," *Journalism Quarterly* 56 (1979): 786.

3. Roger H. Ferger, "To Enquirer Shareholders," in *Annual Report to Shareholders*, 22 December 1955.

4. For a detailed account of how employees acquired, then lost, ownership of the *Cincinnati Enquirer*, see Randolph Lee Reddick, *The Old Lady of Vine Street, Her Children, and the Tafts: How Newspaper Employees Bought (and Lost) The Cincinnati Enquirer, 1952-1956* (Ph.D. diss., Ohio University, 1991).

5. Ben H. Bagdikian, in *The Media Monopoly*, 3rd ed. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1990) relates the increasing role of corporate and chain ownerships of American newspapers.

6. Details of the *Journal* ESOP in this and succeeding paragraphs are taken from Conrad, Wilson and Wilson, 175-181.

7. Cited in Conrad, Wilson, and Wilson, 179.

8. The spelling is that of the Trust. In the 1950s, some newspapers spelled employee with one "e." This paper preserves the original spelling on proper nouns whether one or two e's were used.

9. For brief accounts of how *Enquirer* employees bought the paper in 1952 see James H. Ratliff, Jr, "The 'Old Lady's' Children Knew What to Do!," *Editor & Publisher*, 14 June 1952, 9, 79-80, and other related articles which begin on pages 9-11 in the same magazine. See also James A. Maxwell, "Cliff-hanger in Cincinnati: How Newspapermen Became Publishers," *The Reporter*, 2 September 1952, 17-21. For a more thorough treatment see Reddick, 1991.

10. In a letter to attorney A.L. Bienstock, 24 February 1952, Ratliff described key elements of the then secret employee purchase plan, including learning from the *Journal* experience. Letter used with permission of James H. Ratliff, Cincinnati, Ohio.

11. Enquirer Employees Committee For Employee Ownership, "Questions Asked Mr. Irwin Maier ... and His Answers," undated memo [about March 25, 1952], used with permission of James

H. Ratliff, Cincinnati, Ohio.

12. The meeting between Maier and Enquirer representatives had to have taken place before the last week of March because the memo reporting conversations with Maier went out to employees during that week. It is improbable that the meeting took place before February 24, because Ratliff's letter to A.L. Bienstock of that date stresses security noting only a small group of close Enquirer associates knew of the plan. Not until mid March did the employee ownership movement headed by Ratliff include a cross section of employees.

13. American Security and Trust Co., the bank which administered the estate of John Roll McLean, had offices in Washington, D.C. McLean owned the Enquirer at the time of his death in 1916.

14. "Hal Metzger Elected EAB Chairman," Your Voice in the Enquirer, April, 1953, 1.

15. "Cincinnati Enquirer moves ahead as publicly-owned newspaper," Tide, 10 October, 1953, 65.

16. "May 16 Limit for All Bids For Cincinnati Enquirer," Editor & Publisher, 3 May 1952, 7-8.

17. Roger H. Ferger, 22 December 1955.

18. "Here's the linage record of the nation's leading newspapers over the past eight years," Editor & Publisher, 10 March 1956, Media Records data included in advertisement, 22-23.

19. Enquirer circulation in the Greater Cincinnati area rose 11,138 copies between June of 1952 and August of 1953, according to an account in "September Circulation Over 200,000," Your Voice in the Enquirer, September, 1953, 2. See also "Gains in Linage, Circulation, Pay," Editor & Publisher, 10 December 1955, 11.

20. Ray Vicker, "Employe Owners Work Harder, Show Little Management Interest," Wall Street Journal, 10 January 1956, 1, 9.

21. Fred Stannard, Jr, "Man Bites Dog: The Cincinnati Enquirer Makes Its Own Financial News," Barron's, 11 July 1955, 15-16.

22. "Cincinnati Enquirer moves ahead."

23. During the first three years of the publicly owned company dividends were thirty cents a share ($10 par value). In the fourth year, dividends doubled. See "Enquirer's Profit Rises; 60¢ Dividend," Editor & Publisher 22 December 1956, 50.

24. "Enquirer Ousts Ratliff as 'Veep'," Cincinnati Times-Star, 19 November 1955, begins with a sentence which claims Ratliff was "known by his fellow employes as the savior of the Enquirer." Ratliff was widely and generally credited as the prime mover in the enterprise which turned the Enquirer over to employees and other shareholders.

25. "Ratliff Ousted as Enquirer V.P.," The Cincinnati Post, 19 November 1955. This article reported McGrath was in Europe. Both this article and "Enquirer Ousts Ratliff as 'Veep'" in the Times-Star gave similar accounts of the meeting.

26. Between November 19, 1955, and December 10, 1955, articles on the feud at the Enquirer appeared every publishing day in the Cincinnati papers. Articles slowed to about two-per-week until the end of December and continued almost daily until the board of directors election on January 17-18, 1956.

27. Both "Ratliff Group Airs Its Case Against Enquirer Managers," Editor & Publisher, 3 December 1955, 10, 65, and "Ferger Brands Ratliff Story As 'Inaccurate, Careless'," Editor & Publisher, 10 December 1955, 11, 77 report major issues in the case. Again, nearly every week in December and in January Editor & Publisher reported on the feud. See also "what's news ... ... and why," Printer's Ink, 9 December 1955.

28. "Ousted In Dispute At Cincinnati Paper," The New York Times, 5 December 1955.

29. "When Employee-Owners and Bosses Fall Out," Business Week, 28 January 1956, 110-112, 114.

30. "Cincinnati fracas," Time, 5 December 1955, 85, and "Round Two in Cincinnati," Time, 19 December 1955, 50.

31. "Cincinnati Commotion," Newsweek, 19 December 1955, 65.

32. "Cincinnati Newspaper Editor, Columnist Fired," Worcester (Mass.) Telegram, 5 December 1955.

33. "Anti-Management Man Ratliff Named to Board Of

Cincinnati Enquirer," The Wall Street Journal, 19 January 1956, 10.

34. "Scripps-Howard Buys Enquirer Debentures," The Cincinnati Post, 26 April 1956.

35. A poster printed about November 18 and signed "Original Employee Committee of Six To Save the Enquirer" originally called for a meeting of employees at 5 p.m. on Monday, November 21, on the fourth floor of the Enquirer building. In a telegram dated 19 November 1955, Roger Ferger told Ratliff he was to cancel the meeting. Poster and telegram used with permission of James H. Ratliff, Jr., Cincinnati, Ohio. In canceling the November 21 meeting, Ratliff agreed to an arrangement in which he and his followers would be permitted to present their case during a series of meetings on Tuesday, November 22. At the first of the Tuesday meetings Assistant Publisher Eugene Duffield announced the meetings had been canceled "for the good of the paper." See "Enquirer Staff Calls Meetings," the Cincinnati Post, 24 November, 1955. See also Roger H. Ferger, "Statement of Roger H. Ferger, Publisher to Enquirer Employees," memo dated 22 November, 1955, used with permission of James H. Ratliff, Jr., Cincinnati, Ohio.

36. Meetings were held at 11:30 a.m., 5 and 9 p.m. to accommodate different shifts of Enquirer employees.

37. James H. Ratliff, "Statement of Jim Ratliff," prepared text delivered 25 November 1955 at Hotel Metropole. Copy in author's possession at Lubbock, Texas.

38. Al Schottelkotte, in Athens, Ohio, 3 March 1990.

39. Roger H. Ferger, "Statement of Roger H. Ferger, President and Publisher of The Cincinnati Enquire delivered at Cox Theater, Cincinnati, Ohio" 4 December 1955, copy in author's possession Lubbock, Texas.

40. "Enquirer Fires Two From Staff," Cincinnati Post, 5 December, 1955.

41. "Portsmouth Steel Insisted That Ferger Continue as Publisher," Editor & Publisher, 10 December 1955, 79.

42. Ibid. 78.

43. Henry Berne, "Letter to the Editor of the Enquirer," The Cincinnati Enquirer, 10 December 1955. The letters in question are: H.L. Stuart to J.H. Ratliff, letter, 30 November 1955, and H.L. Stuart to J.H. Ratliff, letter, 1 December

1955, used with permission of J.H. Ratliff, Cincinnati.

44. "Enquirer Fires Two From Staff."

45. Robert Taft, Jr. confirmed these discussions and that they were precipitated by changes in the *Enquirer* lease in his "Epilogue for a Lady: The Passing of the Times-Star," *Historical and Philosophical Society of Ohio Bulletin*, (October, 1960): 18:269.

46. "Enquirer Fires Two From Staff."

47. Roger H. Ferger, December 4, 1955.

48. For accounts of the proxy battle, see "Ferger Hires Agency to Get Stock Proxies," *The Cincinnati Post*, 9 January 1956; "Ratliff Tops Field In Enquirer Voting," *Cincinnati Times-Star*, 18 January 1956; and "Anti-Management Man Ratliff Named to Board of Cincinnati Enquirer," *Wall Street Journal*, 19 January 1956.

49. J. Henry Berne to Fellow Members Of the Board of Directors, 14 February 1956, used with permission of James H. Ratliff, Cincinnati.

50. "Enquirer Control For Sale, Is Report," *Cincinnati Times-Star*, 28 February 1956.

51. "Scripps-Howard Buys Enquirer Debentures."

52. "Scripps Eyes More Stock, Tightens Grip on Enquirer," *Cincinnati Times-Star*, 27 April 1956.

53. Joseph E. Doran, "Enquirer Dispute Began in 1951 -- Here's Story," the *Cincinnati Post*, 28 November 1955.

54. Robert A. Taft, Jr., in Cincinnati, May 31, 1990.

55. Joel L. Irwin, telephone interview, August 18, 1989.

56. James H. Ratliff, Jr. and John F. Cronin, "The Enquirer Story," [1953] unpublished manuscript used with permission of James H. Ratliff, Cincinnati.

57. James H. Ratliff, Jr., at Cincinnati, November 27, 1989.

58. Francis L. Dale, telephone interview, December 21, 1989.

59. "Cincinnati Enquirer Moves Ahead," 66.

60. Graydon DeCamp, The Grand Old Lady of Vine Street, (Cincinnati: The Merten Co., 1991), 117-124.

61. Details of the attorneys' work are described in James H. Ratliff Jr. and John F. Cronin, "The Enquirer Story," unpublished manuscript [1953] used with permission of James H. Ratliff, Cincinnati, Ohio. A list of the company's first officers is given in "Charter is Filed," Cincinnati Enquirer, 6 June 1952.

62. "Duffield Is Named Executive Vice President," Cincinnati Enquirer, 17 June 1952.

63. "Enquirer Board is Expanded; Business Leaders Are Named To Join Group of Employees," Cincinnati Enquirer, 12 July 1952.

64. New directors included Carl Jacobs, who was senior partner in Frost & Jacobs, as well as a director of the Kroger Co. and of Lincoln National Bank. He also had served as assistant county prosecutor (1912-1914), assistant city prosecutor (1914-1916) and vice mayor (1917-1921). Jacobs replaced Charles G. Puchta Jr., who had represented Frost and Jacobs on the board in earlier versions. Joel M. Bowlby, Chairman of the Board of Eagle-Picher Co. and director of the Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland, joined the board. William L. McGrath, President of the Williamson Heater Co., was also a director of Provident Savings Bank and Trust Co. and of Cincinnati Gas & Electric Co. McGrath also served as a member of the U.S. employer delegation to the International Labor Organization. James D. Shouse, vice president and director of Avco Manufacturing, joined the Enquirer board. He also was Chairman of the Board of Crosley Broadcasting which operated WLW in Cincinnati. Jacobs, Shouse, McGrath, and Bowlby were active leaders in various Cincinnati civic associations.

Ratliff also joined the board as did Harold LeBlond, president of the Cleveland Automatic Machine Co. and vice president of the R.K. LeBlond Machine Tool Co. He was also a director of Cincinnati Gas & Electric Co., the Cincinnati Rubber Co., and the United States Shoe Corp. Powel Crosley became a director of the new company. Crosley was president of the Cincinnati Reds and Crosley Motor Co. and a director of Crosley Broadcasting, Fifth Third Union Trust Co. and TWA, Inc. Edward Helmick and Frank E. Wood occupied temporary seats on the Enquirer board as guardians of Portsmouth Steel's interests. They were to be replaced by employee representatives Charlie Staab and by compositor William Fortlage when the Enquirer paid off Portsmouth Steel.

65. For a brief history of the U.S. Army Counter Intelligence Corps and some account of Ratliff's role in it, see

Ian Sayer and Douglas Botting, America's Secret Army: The untold story of the Counter Intelligence Corps (New York: Franklin Watts, 1989).

66. James H. Ratliff to Randy Reddick, 25 January 1990, in author's possession in Lubbock, Texas.

# THE VIABILITY OF THE COMPREHENSIVE DAILY NEWSPAPER

By

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# THE VIABILITY OF THE COMPREHENSIVE DAILY NEWSPAPER

By William B. Blankenburg

The comprehensive daily – the newspaper most Americans are familiar with – is the result of late 19th-century technologies that led to fewer, larger, and less individualistic journals. Economies of scale in production, improved telecommunications and transportation, and the rise of mass-produced (and advertised) consumer goods resulted in dailies that tried to be most things to most people.[1]

The diversity of content between newspapers was replaced by diversity within newspapers as publishers sought wider audiences and market dominance. The newer diversity may not have been as antagonistic as marketplace theorists would prefer, but it did confront subscribers with some content they would not get in a favorite partisan paper.

Often deservedly maligned, the large monopolistic daily was nonetheless a bazaar of offerings. The benefit to readers was a low-cost array of information, some of it dross, some just what they wanted, and some that was a serendipitous bonus.

The reach of the comprehensive daily began to weaken at mid-century because of changes in competition and lifestyle.[2] By 1970, total U.S. daily circulation had fallen below the number of households for the first time in this century.[3] For adults 25 to 64, there were 71 newspapers sold per hundred in 1960, and 52 per hundred in 1988.[4] That number is forecast to decline to 40 per hundred by 1995.[5]

Newspaper executives voice considerable concern over these developments and propose a variety of ways to stem the tide,[6] though some experts perceive an irreversible trend.[7]

The decline of the general newspaper is not entirely a matter of environment. It can be demonstrated that maximum sales don't mean maximum profits, and some newspapers have selectively reduced their circulations.[8] Further, many advertisers now seek specialized audiences. For these and other reasons, the general daily newspaper may not survive.

This paper uses secondary analysis of two recently composed data sets to investigate the viability of the comprehensive daily newspaper.

## The Difficulty of Maintaining Circulation

Trouble with circulation is apparent in the NRC-Inland Data Set, which contains extensive financial and market data on 46 American dailies from 25,000 to 80,000 circulation. Since 1919 the Inland Press Association has gathered cost and revenue data so that participants can compare their financial performance with that of other dailies. About 450 types of information are recorded annually for the more than 300 North American dailies that voluntarily participate. Newspapers of all sizes take part, but data are made public only for those under 80,000 circulation. The identities of the newspapers are kept in strict confidence.

This special data set was composed under a grant from the Newspaper Research Council, and it combines selected Inland data with market information from other sources. Because longitudinal analysis was of interest, the NRC-Inland Data Set began with dailies that were Inland participants every year from 1985 through 1989. This netted 51 newspapers. Later, certain data for 1990 and 1981 were added. Because not all newspapers participate continuously, the net sample was 46.[9] Circulation and household data were recorded for 1981 and 1990. Financial data are from the period 1985-90.[10]

Table 1 describes some trends for 46 American dailies during the 1980s. Total circulation and market data are for 1981 and 1990, while the performance ratios are 1985 to 1990.

**-----Table 1-----**

The 46 newspapers in the NRC-Inland Data Set ranged in total 1990 circulation[11] from 23,600 to 78,000, with a mean of 42,970. This was an average decline of nearly 2% from 1981. County weekday circulation, averaging 29,361 in 1990, declined 4.6%. These decreases become more severe in light of the 11% increase in home-county households in the same nine years, and a drop of 13% in weekday county penetration (circulation per household). Of the 46 dailies, 15 were in metro markets, 11 were in suburbs, and 20 were in other markets.

Part B of Table 1 shows performance trends from 1985 to 1990. Gross profit margin averaged 18.3% over the five years, but the mean profit margin of 1990 was only 89% of what it had been in 1985. From 1985 to 1990, the number of ROP pages remained constant. Operating news hole increased 12%, perhaps due to a shift of advertising from ROP to preprint. Expenses increased faster than revenues as newspapers encountered hard times on the advertising side. Circulation revenues rose more than advertising revenues, and circulation prices increased more than advertising prices. Thus circulation's share of revenues – its income burden – rose by 7% in the five-year period. Publishers are inclined to maintain total revenues by boosting circulation rates because demand for circulation tends to be inelastic with price.[12] Albert E. Gollin, vice president for research of the Newspaper Advertising Bureau, commented on 1991 circulation declines: "Prices took their toll, as many newspapers struggled to offset shrinking advertising revenues and maintain profitability by raising the cost of subscriptions and street-sold copies to readers."[13]

--------**Table 2**--------

Table 2 contains some lessons about maintaining circulation penetration. It describes the six largest dailies in the NRC-Inland Data Set. All have total circulations between 70,000 and 80,000, and one in particular stands out for its circulation performance. It is compared to the other five. The variables are presented in three sets: performance on circulation and profits, market structure, and the conduct of the companies with respect to certain costs and revenues.

The large daily that was most successful in circulation performance increased its total, county, metro, and city-zone circulations from 1981 to 1990, while the other five as a group declined. The leading newspaper stayed even in penetration over the nine years, but the others declined 20%.

However, the average profit rate, 1985-90, for the best circulation performer was less than half that of the other five.

The trends of structural variables did not favor the best performer. Its county growth was about the same as the others, but its retail sales and income growth were less.

The leading newspaper spent slightly more on news-editorial (as a percentage of total expenses) than the others, and quite a lot more on its average cost per page. Its news-editorial wages were 29% higher than the other large dailies ($33,261 to $25,723), and its wage rate grew more than the other dailies from 1985 to 1990.[14]

The best performer had circulation and distribution costs about the same as the others, but it placed less reliance on circulation in its revenue mix. Further, it reduced its reliance on circulation revenue, 1985 to 1990, while the others increased theirs (.98 to 1.03). (Nor were its advertising rates very high – $12.39 an inch for retail ROP, compared to $15.73.) Its average revenues per subscriber were 12% less than the average of the others.

Promotion did not play a large role in the best performer's strategies. It spent .8% of its total newspaper expenses on promotion while the others spent an average 2.9%.

This table suggests that circulation can be maintained, but to the detriment of profits. However, if maintaining market share in terms of circulation is a good long-term strategy, the cost may be worthwhile.

## Four Strategies

A tradeoff between market share and profit margin was addressed by the American Newspaper Publishers Association Competitive Analysis Project (CAP) study, released in spring 1992.[15] It reviewed the competitive media environment and envisioned the financial and business implications of four strategies – called "appeals" by the CAP – that newspapers might follow in the 1990s:

1. *The Mass Appeal.* Continue to seek the widest audience through diverse content and low pricing. Try to maintain market share at some sacrifice to profit margin. (As seems to have been the case with the best-performing daily in Table 2.) This would maintain what is conceived here as the "comprehensive daily." This strategy chooses breadth and universality over depth and specialization.[16]

2. *The Class Appeal.* Target loyal and affluent readers and maintain high profit margins on higher circulation revenues. Let penetration decline and tell advertisers that the attractive demographics justify the high cost per thousand.

3. *The Individual Appeal.* Target demographic groups with new editorial products, striving to reach every household at least once a week with some published package, not necessarily including a general news section. What was once a "newspaper publishing company" could now be described as a "publishing company." The newspaper would unbundle into specialized products serving consumer segments. In the CAP example were four weekly special-interest sections subscribed to separately (arts, sports, business, and news), three free weekly sections targeted to lifestyles, and two monthly traders for automotive and real-estate advertising.

4. *The Direct Appeal.* According to the CAP, this strategy is fundamentally oriented to advertisers' needs, providing products and services that connect them with desired consumers. The "publishing company" is now a "marketing company" that uses its customer database to bring consumers to advertisers through audiotex, direct mail, publications, or whatever it takes. A newspaper activity could remain as one of several marketing vehicles – as long as it made money.[17]

The CAP models all begin in 1990 as the same newspaper – a hypothetical 50,000-circulation daily that is the composite of 15 real dailies with circulations from 45,000 to 55,000. The market structure is also a composite. The CAP task force, a dozen newspaper executives supported by ANPA staff, also composed a set of assumptions about market growth, costs, and revenues.[18]

In projections, the four strategies produce roughly the same bottom line in the year 2000 but leave the newspaper in four radically different positions, according to the study's authors.

**------Table 3-------**

Table 3 summarizes the task force projections. Part A shows that the Individual and Direct scenarios will yield the most revenues but also incur the greatest costs. As a result, their profit margins will be less than the other two plans, and their profit growth rate would be the smallest over the period. But the Mass, or general, newspaper would have even less profit growth. The Class scenario is the most profitable.

In its preliminary report, entitled "The Battle for Waterloo"[19] the task force declared a draw at the bottom line but noted that the four outcomes positioned the firms much differently for the next century. The differences are apparent in Part B. In shifting more revenue burden to subscribers, the Class approach allows penetration to fall to 33% of households, compared to 46% for the traditional Mass approach.[20] Thus market share is sacrificed for profits.

But newspapers operate in a dual product market, selling content to consumers and then selling consumer attention to advertisers.[21] For newspapers, market share can be adduced for circulation *or* advertising. The Class approach is the weakest in maintaining both shares. It bears signs of short-term benefit and long-term jeopardy for its management.

**-------Table 4--------**

Implications for the 21st century become more apparent in Table 4, which ranks the four strategies on certain outcomes. The Class approach, which is best in profitability, is worst in maintaining share. Its revenue growth rate from 1995 to 2000 is the weakest, again suggesting it is not well positioned to succeed financially in the next century. The most radical approach, the Direct, seems the best prepared – and the greatest departure from tradition.

## Conclusions

The traditional newspaper has been plagued by attractive rivals for consumer attention and by shrewd competitors for advertising. As audiences fragmented, advertisers began to target the segments they most desired. Some merchants bypassed the mass media altogether and reached their targets by name and household. The percentage of households that take a paper has steadily declined. None of this bodes well for the kind of newspaper that evolved late in the last century.

The "successful" daily of Table 2 maintained its circulation penetration while its Inland peers declined an average of 20%. The apparent price of this circulation success was a 50% discount to the bottom line. To judge from the information available, the newspaper was not maximizing profits. One inference is that its publisher strove to maintain circulation in hopes of protecting its share of advertising in years ahead. But alternative advertising media are in place that offer more precise targets than the comprehensive daily, and publishers face a powerful temptation to shift the income burden to circulation because of inelasticities of demand. The experts who composed the CAP models predicted no happy ending for the Mass strategy. Rather, they saw the Class strategy as the default.

Perhaps the four CAP models should be viewed as an evolutionary forecast rather than separate strategic options. As a progression, the CAP strategies accord with Merrill and Lowenstein's theory that the growth and nature of the mass media follow stages that result from overall social and economic development.[22] They held that the media are elitist in their beginnings, when few people have the means to consume them. Then with prosperity and literacy, the media become "popular" and "mass." In the third stage the media grow more specialized and fragmented as society advances in terms of educational opportunity, affluence, leisure time, and population. The CAP model seems to fit the latter two stages of Merrill and Lowenstein's theory of media evolution.[23]

The Class stage appears to be unfolding. In this phase, the hard-to-catch marginal reader can be ignored, journalistic quality improves to retain an affluent audience, production costs fall with circulation, and profits rise in the short run, which may be as far as some managers care to look.[24]

In targeting affluent consumers, the Class appeal is a step toward the Individual strategy outlined by the CAP, in which demographic groups are targeted for fairly distinct printed packages. This could mean unbundling the comprehensive newspaper and selling the parts separately. The rudiments of partitioning have been in place for a long time: editorial sectioning and circulation zoning. New technologies of pagination, printing, and collation make finer segmentation possible.[25] Increasing pressure to deliver particular audiences makes it probable.[26]

With further technological and competitive changes, the metamorphosis from newspaper publishing company to direct-marketing firm can be completed. Some publishers recognize that their subscriber lists contain consumer information of great value to advertisers,[27] and some newspapers already offer a variety of nontraditional information services.[28] New alliances have been forged with companies that will be major players in the megamedium resulting from a convergence of telephone, cable, broadcast, and computer technologies.[29]

If the evolutionary model is correct, the comprehensive daily newspaper is not viable. Only pieces of it will survive, probably in targeted combinations, perhaps for a very long time. Some of its functions will be carried out by other means in the converged megamedium. The vertical integration of the newspaper industry will end, and with it, presumably, the local monopoly that owed to economies of scale in production.[30] In the hazy future the optimist sees the public freed from the shackles of old monopolistic media that constricted the flow of information vital to democracy. But the pessimist worries that a huge information utility controlled by mammoth venal corporations will widen the gaps between rich and poor, invade privacy, and destroy the communities of interest that shared the comprehensive daily newspaper.[31]

###

**TABLE 1. Descriptive statistics, NRC-Inland Data Set.**

| | mean values 1981 | mean values 1990 |
|---|---|---|
| A. Circulation trends | | |
| Inland (total) circulation | 43,730 | 42,971 |
| County weekday circulation | 30,785 | 29,362 |
| County weekday penetration | 60% | 52% |
| County households | 61,500 | 68,420 |
| County household income | $20,796 | $34,569 |
| County retail sales per household | $12,786 | $21,008 |

| B. Selected changes from 1985 to 1990 | ratio, 1990/1985 |
|---|---|
| ROP pages per year | 1.00 |
| Total newspaper revenue | 1.20 |
| Total newspaper expense | 1.24 |
| Gross newspaper profit margin | .89 |
| Circulation revenue per subscriber | 1.29 |
| Circulation rev/total np rev | 1.07 |
| Retail ROP ad rev per inch | 1.26 |
| News hole | 1.12 |

**TABLE 2. The best circulation performer compared to five other large dailies.**

| | The most successful newspaper | Mean, the other five newspapers |
|---|---|---|
| A. Performance | | |
| Inland (total) 1990 circulation | 74,700 | 73,483 |
| Total circ 90/81 | 1.07 | .98 |
| County circ 90/81 | 1.11 | .90 |
| Metro area circ 90/81 | 1.11 | .95 |
| City zone circ 90/81 | 1.10 | .93 |
| County penetration 90/81 | 1.0 | .80 |
| Avg gross profit rate 85-90 | 11.5% | 26.3% |
| B. Market Structure | | |
| County households 90/81 | 1.11 | 1.12 |
| Co. household income 90/81 | 1.34 | 1.67 |
| Co. retail sales/hh 90/81 | 1.55 | 1.61 |
| Market type: 1=metro, 2=sub, 3=other | 1.0 | 1.8 |
| C. Conduct | | |
| Av news-ed exp/total np exp 85-90 | 15% | 14% |
| Av news-ed salary change 90/85 | 1.29 | 1.25 |
| Av news-ed salary 85-90 | $33,261 | $25,723 |
| Av news-ed cost per page 85-90 | $344.86 | $234.18 |
| Av circ rev/np rev 85-90 | 19.9% | 22.72% |
| Av circ & dist exp/np exp 85-90 | 12% | 12% |
| Av circ rev/sub 85-90 | $70.17 | $79.97 |
| Av circ rev/np rev 90/85 | .98 | 1.03 |
| Av promotion exp 88-90 | $189,095 | $612,489 |
| Av promotion exp/np exp 88-90 | .82% | 2.89% |
| Retail ROP ad rev per inch 85-90 | $12.39 | $15.73 |

**TABLE 3. ANPA-CAP financial projections for four marketing strategies.**

A. Financial Position, 1990 and 2000

| | Base: | Projections: 2000 | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1990 | Mass | Class | Individual | Direct |
| *Total Revenues | $22.7 | $37.2 | $35.4 | $42.3 | $42.6 |
| *Total Expenses | $17 | $29.3 | $26.6 | $34.2 | $34.3 |
| *Operating Income | $ 5.7 | $ 7.9 | $ 8.8 | $ 8.1 | $ 8.2 |
| Profit Margin | 25.12% | 21.3% | 24.9% | 19.1% | 19.3% |
| Profit Compound Growth Rate | | 3.4% | 4.5% | 3.5% | 3.7% |

*millions of dollars

B. Market Position, 1990 and 2000

| | Base: | Projections: 2000 | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1990 | Mass | Class | Individual | Direct |
| *Daily circ penetration | 50.0 | 46.0 | 33.0 | NA | NA |
| *Ad rev/total revenue | 81.5 | 82.5 | 65.8 | 71.4 | 72.1 |
| *Circ rev/total revenue | 18.5 | 16.9 | 30.8 | 14.9 | 14.8 |
| *New rev/total revenue | 0.0 | 0.6 | 3.4 | 13.8 | 13.1 |
| *Share of local ad $ | 47.8 | 42.2 | 32.0 | 44.4 | 47.8 |
| *daily penetration | 50.0 | 46.4 | 33.0 | 46.4 | 46.4 |
| *ad/edit ratio | 42.6 | 42.9 | 37.0 | 42.1 | 42.9 |
| Total FTEs | 225 | 218 | 207 | 266 | 233 |
| Avg. employee comp. | $32,000 | $57,370 | $60,028 | $59,360 | $57,613 |

*In percent

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**TABLE 4. Ranks* of the four strategies on selected outcomes in the year 2000.**

| | Mass | Class | Individual | Direct |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Profit margin | 2 | 1 | 4 | 3 |
| Profit 10-yr growth rate | 3 | 1 | 4 | 2 |
| Weekday penetration | 2 | 4 | 2 | 2 |
| Share of local ad $ | 3 | 4 | 2 | 1 |
| Total expenses | 3 | 4 | 2 | 1 |
| Operating income | 4 | 1 | 3 | 2 |
| Revenue growth rate, 95-00 | 3 | 4 | 2 | 1 |

*Based on projections in Table 3.

## NOTES

1. Bruce M. Owen, *Economics and Freedom of Expression* (Cambridge, Mass.: Ballinger, 1975), pp. 33-85.

2. Owen, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

3. Leo Bogart, *Press and Public*, 2d ed. (Hillsdale, N.J.: Erlbaum, 1989), p. 15.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 18.

5. *The Veronis, Suhler & Associates Communications Industry Forecast*, 5th ed., June 1991, pp. 146-7.

6. Leading studies of the problem include: Virginia Dodge Fielder and Beverly A. Barnum, "Love Us and Leave Us: New Subscribers One Year Later," ASNE, April 1987; Frank M. Denton, *et al*, "Love 'Em & Keep'Em," ASNE, April 1988; Robert P. Clark, "Success Stories: What 28 Newspapers Are Doing to Gain and Retain Readers," ANPA and Newspaper Advertising Bureau, August 1988; "A Way To Win: Strategies to Evaluate and Improve Your Readership and Circulation," ANPA and Newspaper Advertising Bureau, April 1990.

7. Mark Fitzgerald, "'Dr. Doom': Analyst tells newspaper he sees no market improvement for them in '92," *Editor & Publisher*, Nov. 2, 1991, p. 12. The doomsayer was market analyst Kenneth T. Berents of Alex. Brown & Sons, a brokerage firm. He characterized newspapers as slow to change but praised *USA Today* and the 25/43 project that retargeted the Boca Raton *News* on a young audience.

8. William B. Blankenburg, "Newspaper Ownership and Control of Circulation to Increase Profits," *Journalism Quarterly* 59:390-98 (Autumn 1982).

9. The Inland newspapers are self-selected, and the NRC Data Set further chose newspapers that participated over time and had circulations in the middle range. No probabilistic claims can be made about representativeness. For a test of Inland dailies for representativeness, see Gerald C. Stone, "Validation of Economic Surveys in the Community Newspaper Field," *Journalism Quarterly* 53:312-15, 381 (Summer 1976).

10. William B. Blankenburg and Robert L. Friend, "The Effects of Cost and Revenue Strategies on Circulation," paper presented to the Newspaper Research Council convention, Orlando, April 13, 1992.

11. For simplicity, Inland employs a combined circulation datum for newspapers that have separate circulations for weekday, Saturday, and Sunday; Sunday and Saturday circulations are weighted 1/7th

each, and weekday circulation is weighted 5/7ths, and then summed. The "total circulations" reported in this study are Inland weighted circulations. They are correlated with, but different from the county weekday circulations that were taken from *Newspaper Circulation Analysis* (*NCA*), an annual publication of Standard Rate and Data Service. This source yielded weekday circulation in the county, metro area, city zone, and designated market area; income in the home county; retail sales in the home county; and number of households in the home county. County data are useful because they have stable boundaries over time and permit control for population and wealth.

12. Gerald L. Grotta, "Daily Newspaper Circulation Price Inelastic for 1970-1975, *Journalism Quarterly*, 54:379-82 (Summer 1977); Robert G. Picard, "The Effect of Price Increases on Newspaper Circulation: A Case Study of Inelasticity of Demand," *Newspaper Research Journal,* 12: 64-75 (Summer 1991). Elasticity is the percentage change in quantity demanded relative to the percentage change in price. From the ANPA-CAP models summarized in this study, we can infer price elasticities of demand of .37 for weekday circulation and .23 for Sunday.

13. Albert E. Gollin, "An Assessment of Trends in U.S. Newspaper Circulation and Readership," Newspaper Advertising Bureau, Dec. 1991, p. 3.

14. Litman and Bridges have proposed that financial commitment to the news-editorial product is a surrogate measure of newspaper quality, and Bogart says that quality pays off in circulation, at least in the view of editors he interviewed. If so, the circulation performance of the "successful" newspaper in Table 2 should be heartening. Barry Litman and Janet Bridges, "An Economic Analysis of American Newspapers," *Newspaper Research Journal* 7:9-26 (Spring 1986); Bogart, *op. cit.*, pp. 258-65; 343-44.

15. Deborah Walker and Jane Wilson, "The Battle for Waterloo," a supplement to *Presstime*, September 1991. This was an early summary, based on a presentation at the ANPA convention in May 1991. The analysis in the present study was based on a more extensive manuscript version, the full spreadsheet, and interviews with ANPA Telecommunications Department staff.

16. For an uneasy interpretation of what the four strategies mean for journalists, see Michael R. Fancher, with Kathleen Criner and James Lessersohn, "A Challenge to Journalists for Help," *Nieman Reports*, Spring 1992, pp. 3-6, 21-22.

17. "From a pure business point of view, the newspaper could even come to be considered something like *Reader's Digest* magazine: a publication valued more for its ability to generate lists of names categorized for direct mail sales of other products than for its

traditional journalistic mission." Fancher, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

18. The CAP produced a workbook and spreadsheet so that newspaper executives could insert their own market data and business assumptions and thus reach their own conclusions about the year 2000.

19. Walker and Wilson, *op. cit.*

20. The CAP estimates that the Individual and Direct strategies would also yield a 46% penetration in 2000, but this would not be comparable to the other two strategies due to product changes and market segmentation.

21. Robert G. Picard, *Media Economics: Concepts and Issues* (Newbury Park, Calif: Sage, 1989), pp. 17-19.

22. John C. Merrill and Ralph L. Lowenstein, *Media Messages and Men: New Perspectives in Communication* (New York: David McKay, 1971), pp. 33-44. See also Melvin L. DeFleur and Sandra Ball-Rokeach, *Theories of Mass Communication*, 5th ed. (New York: Longman, 1989), pp. 3-61.

23. Maisel applied the theory to media growth in the United States from 1950 to 1970 and found the media to be shrinking relative to the economy. Richard Maisel, "The Decline of Mass Media," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 37:159-170 (Summer 1973). This was contrary to the theory of "relative constancy," which was proposed around the same time. Maxwell E. McCombs, "Mass Media in the Marketplace," *Journalism Monographs* No. 24, 1972. Both studies were seriously flawed, according to a later analysis. Gary D. Gaddy and Brian C. Deith, "Growth, Stability or Decline? Mass Media and the National Economy," Mass Communication Research Center, School of Journalism and Mass Communication, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1987.

24. Are managers who are not owners (as is typical of larger dailies) primarily oriented to the bottom line? The question has been raised about public ownership. A "journalistic" theory of public ownership holds that public trading of newspaper stock puts emphasis on the bottom line, to the detriment of investment in "quality." Theories of managerial economics expect the opposite, because hired managers are less well rewarded for bottom-line results than owners. Busterna found some support for the journalistic theory. A later study of financial behavior under public ownership likewise supported the journalistic theory that public ownership may orient newspapers to the bottom line. John C. Busterna, "How Managerial Ownership Affects Profit Maximization in Newspaper Firms," *Journalism Quarterly*, 66:302-307, 358 (Summer 1988); William B. Blankenburg and Gary W. Ozanich, "The Effects of Public Ownership on the Financial Performance of Newspaper Corporations," *Journalism Quarterly*, in press.

25. George Cashau, vice president/technical of the Newspaper Association of America, has described the necessary processes as feasible. "Newspapers in the year 2000 envisioned," *Editor & Publisher*, June 23, 1990, p. 28.

26. William B. Blankenburg, "Unbundling the Daily Newspaper," in Philip S. Cook, Douglas Gomery, and Lawrence W. Lichty, eds., *The Future of News* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1992), pp. 112-20.

27. Lisa Benenson, "The Data Chase," *Adweek*, May 4, 1992, pp. 6-7.

28. Providing "900" telephone lines is an example. *USA Today* offered ski conditions on a 900 line, drawing fees from subscribers and advertising from Miller Lite beer. Randall Rothenberg, "Newspapers and Magazines Dial 900 for New Revenues," *New York Times*, April 22, 1991, p. C1. Such an activity also adds information on the callers to direct-marketing databases.

29. For example, Dow Jones & Co. and BellSouth, a regional telephone company, formed a "strategic alliance to identify, develop, and market information services." "Dow Jones Joins with BellSouth To Develop Services," *Wall Street Journal*, May 1, 1992, p. B6.

30. To prevent monopoly, Owen, *op. cit.*, p. 185, advocated separation of printing and delivery systems from editorial and newsgathering functions.

31. For contrasting outlooks, see Vincent Mosco, "Une Drôle de Guerre," *Media Studies Journal* 6:47-60 (Spring 1992); Donald McNamara, "At the Front: Clash of Cultures," *Media Studies Journal* 6:29-45 (Spring 1992).

# ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE:
# A SHIELD AGAINST ORGANIZATIONAL STRESS

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# ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE:
# A SHIELD AGAINST ORGANIZATIONAL STRESS

## INTRODUCTION

To accept the proposition that an organization is something more than a collection of the individuals who work within it, is to accept as well the proposition that an organization can have a life of its own. Researchers who study organizational culture build on this foundation to determine if an organization, as differentiated from the individuals within it, will be able to meet the needs of its changing environment.

During a longer study of the *Detroit Free Press*, as the newspaper made the transition from independent production to production under a joint operating agreement (JOA), this author examined the organizational culture of the *Free Press* newsroom. The goal was to determine its role in sustaining journalists through four years of turmoil caused by lengthy administrative proceedings and court challenges regarding the JOA. That research demonstrated that *Free Press* journalists were able to survive the lengthy and morale-sapping process because the newsroom culture was so strong. Though the JOA prompted significant structural changes in work flow and in the appearance of the newspaper, the essence of the journalistic side of the *Free Press* remained the same, despite fears that the JOA would somehow change its 160-year-old character.

To arrive at certain of the conclusions in the longer analysis, it was necessary to determine if the strength of the *Free Press* newsroom culture made it an "effective" organization. "Effectiveness" in this context is a judgment of the results of the decision-making process in the organization, which means that both the internal characteristics of the organization and the proactive efforts of individual members must be examined.[1] The determination of this effectiveness will be explored in detail in this paper.

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[1] See March & Simon (1958) for a full discussion of the decision-making process in organizations.

## ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE THEORY

### Definition

The definition of "organizational culture" used in this study is that developed by Schein (1985), following a lengthy period of concept exploration by other theorists in the business management literature. Though the level of discussion for his work was the organization, Schein provided a definition of culture that could be used at any of the structural levels of analysis (civilization, countries, ethnic groups, occupational community, organizations, subgroups):

> A pattern of basic assumptions -- invented, discovered, or developed by a given group as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration -- that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems (p. 9).

Schein's definition greatly expanded the potential value of the concept since it included its impact on the important organizational issues of organization/environment interaction, socialization of members, and the effect of strategic decision making.

The organizational culture model of analyzing a newspaper organization was chosen over competing models[2] for two important reasons. First, the organizational culture model draws its strength from a combination of perspectives, primarily those grounded in Social Psychology, Management, and Sociology. Such a multidisciplinary perspective allows the researcher to approach the analysis from a broader theoretical base. Second, as the ownership of newspaper organizations has become more concentrated, newspapers have become more concerned about the "bottom line" in their struggle to compete with each other and with other media. For example, the most recent annual review of the newspaper industry by *Editor & Publisher* referred to the year 1991 as "one of the worst years in decades" financially, and forecast that any profits growth in 1992 would come from "trimmed operating expenses -- smaller staffs, tighter news holes, low newsprint prices -- and higher prices to readers" (Garneau, 1992, p. 12). This trend was eminently clear in the present study, which focuses on the effect of a significant business-related change on the non-business operations of a newspaper.

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[2] Some alternative models for analyzing news organizations include Breed (1955), Epstein 1973), Gans (1979), Roshco (1975), Schudson (1973), Sigal (1973), Sigelman (1973), and Tuchman (1978).

## Background

*Culture* as a concept is most closely aligned with the field of anthropology, having been "displaced" from that field to an organization setting. Morey and Luthans (1985) identified six attributes that anthropologists agree make up the concept. These are that culture is: (1) Learned (not biological nor genetic). (2) Shared by people as members of social groups (not idiosyncratic). (3) Transgenerational and cumulative in its development (passed from one generation to the next). (4) Symbolic (based on human capacity to symbol). (5) Patterned, organized and integrated (a change in any one part changes other parts as well). (6) Adaptive (the basic human adaptive mechanism, as opposed to the more genetically-based adaptive systems of most other animals).

Deal and Kennedy (1982) published a watershed theoretical work on *organizational culture* in which they identified and described five elements that determine the kind of culture a company will have: (1) The business environment faced by a company in its unique marketplace is "the single greatest influence in shaping a corporate culture." (2) Values and beliefs of an organization "form the heart of the corporate culture." (3) Heroes "personify the culture's values" and provide tangible role models for employees. (4) The Rites and Rituals "are the systematic and programmed routines of day-to-day life in the company" which "show employees the kind of behavior that is expected of them." (5) The Cultural Network is "the primary [but informal] means of communication within an organization" which carries "corporate values and heroic mythology" (pp. 13-15).

Several years later, Lorsch (1986) identified a critical connection between culture and strategy, arguing that strategic choice -- by which he means "the stream of decisions taken over time by top managers, which, when understood as a whole, reveal the goals they are seeking and the means used to reach these goals" -- requires a basic rethinking of a company's core beliefs, or culture (p. 95). Lorsch concluded that strong belief systems were critical components in corporate success which facilitate speedy and coherent strategic choices. Many of these beliefs "describe the essence of the company's character and competence" (p. 109).

Many proponents of the value of the organizational culture concept claim that its most significant use is in the understanding of corporate change. Even the largely descriptive work of Deal and Kennedy (1982) points out that change always threatens a culture, resulting in employees offering strong resistance to new ideas. But, if an organizational culture is well understood, the proposed change could be better facilitated by tying it to elements of that organizational culture. General examples are to put an organizational "hero" in charge of the change process, or to make transition rituals the pivotal elements of change by providing training in new values and behavior problems.

Equally as strong in research value as the issue of change is the issue of effective organizational socialization. Morgan (1989) emphasizes that the stories and myths which are part of an organization's culture are important sources of information for people in organizations about *how things are done around here*. This is in congruence with Durkheim's (1934) claim that shared symbols are necessary for cultural cohesion. Morgan (1989) asserted that the information dispensed in cultural stories helps employees learn about acceptable behavior or attitudes in the organization. Additionally, the cultural metaphor directs attention to the symbolic or magical significance of the most rational aspects of organizational life, and uniquely focuses attention on the human side of organizations. Furthermore, the concept has a "reinterpretation" benefit -- both regarding traditional managerial concepts and processes, as well as regarding the nature and significance of organization/environment relations.

Schein's (1985) definitional work is supplemented by that of Lucas (1987), who argued that it was important to define the political aspects of organization culture (the nature of organizational interest groups, the relations between them, and the cultural consequences of the relations). Lucas then combines those interest group politics with structural anthropology perspectives in order to classify organizational cultures in comparative analyses of organizations. The important contribution of this combined perspective is the adoption of the subgroup as the unit of analysis in cultural research, which thus allows for the possibility of multiple cultures within an organization.

## RESEARCH INTEREST

The subgroup unit of analysis is important in the present study since the focus of this research was the "newsroom culture" of the *Free Press*, rather than the culture of the business component of the newspaper, or these combined subcultures. Certainly, the JOA had a devastating effect on the business subgroup of the *Free Press*, and there is no doubt that a study of that subgroup would have very different conclusions from those found in a study of the newsroom subgroup. But the present study examines that organizational subgroup which is, by law,[3] to remain independent when newspapers join business operations.

## ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AND ECONOMIC EFFECTIVENESS

### Promoting Economic Efficiency

While the organizational culture concept is useful for descriptive purposes, the concept has a second, and more important, purpose in promoting economic efficiency within an organization. Camerer and Vepsalainen (1988) view organizational culture as a solution to the problem of managers not knowing all possible contingencies in the operation of an organization nor having them specified ahead of time in employment contracts. Essentially, these Wharton School economists view organizational culture as an alternative to written contracts, whereby management saves the time otherwise spent in trying to exactly spell out every nuance of the job. Basically, the organization benefits in times of unforeseen contingencies if employees can accurately guess what they should do based on broad and clear cultural rules. There is an "economy of scale" in using cultural rules instead of formal procedures to accomplish the same end. The cultural rules discussed by Camerer and Vepsalainen (1988) take the form of the simple components as described by Deal and Kennedy (1982). Such concrete cultural artifacts as stories and actions of role models are the "most memorable" in communicating culture, while "abstract rules (like 'maximize profits') are cognitively uneconomical" (Camerer & Vepsalainen, 1988, p. 120).

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[3] The Newspaper Preservation Act of 1970 [15 USCA Sections 1801-1804 (1970)] is essentially economic legislation, enacted to exempt certain "failing newspapers" from the existing provisions of the Sherman Antitrust Act [15 USCA Sections 1-3] and the Clayton Act [15 USCA Sections 13, 14, 18], in order that they might continue to be "editorially and reportorially independent and competitive in all parts of the United States."

Camerer and Vepsalainen (1988) identified four dimensions of cultures which enable understanding of their economic benefits:

> (1) A *visible* culture is one that prospective employees can see from the outside. ... Firms with visible cultures presumably have lower labor turnover than firms with invisible cultures, because employees know what to expect before they join such firms.
>
> (2) A *thick* culture is one with many cultural rules.
>
> (3) A *consistent* culture is one in which employees and managers agree on what the cultural rules are. ... A consistent culture is economical, regardless of what its rules are.
>
> ... Consistency creates two kinds of efficiencies.... *Horizontal efficiency* results when different employees can blindly coordinate activities and economize on communication costs (including the costs of delay). ... *Vertical efficiency* results when employees can guess what their bosses want them to do ... so they can economize on monitoring or delegation costs. The most important vertical efficiency stems from faith among employees that they will eventually be rewarded for short-run sacrifices which are in the firm's interests. A consistent culture instills a faith in future rewards which is akin to religious faith.

> (4) An *appropriate* culture is one which fits the strategic needs of a firm's business. (pp. 120-121)

The normative implications of the Camerer and Vepsalainen (1988) thesis are significant for the present study. They point out that cultures cannot just be "created" at the whim of a manager, but that "appropriate, consistent cultures are typically stumbled upon, not designed, by charismatic leaders who establish focal principles by their own examples" (p. 123). Additionally, as other organizational culture researchers before them had discovered, it is the early history of a company that most often determines its culture. But because the culture is embodied in the stories of these long-ago times, it is so difficult to change that the authors concluded that:

> When the business environment changes and makes a consistent culture suddenly inappropriate, managers may be better off finding new businesses to apply the culture to, rather than trying to change the culture to suit the new needs of its old business (p. 124).

Thus, it is important to underscore the necessity of maintaining the culture, first by explaining to new employees the unwritten rules of the organization, and thus socializing them to the organization, and second, by a "relentless signaling to maintain faith, once it is imbedded, in the cultural rules of the firm" (p. 124). As will be detailed in the section to follow, this leads to the development of a model of organizational effectiveness.

## A Model of Organizational Effectiveness

Denison (1990) developed a "theory of organizational culture and effectiveness" and demonstrated that the two have a close relationship because it is the core values and beliefs of an organization which are at the basis of management practices. Denison said that "concrete policies and practices are often difficult to separate from the core values and beliefs and the system of shared meaning that supports them" (pp. 4-5). He synthesized the scholarly and popular literature on organizational culture to develop four "integrative principles" which describe how an organization's culture influences its effectiveness. The principles provide a framework for the discussion of the organizational culture at the *Free Press*, and are described by Denison in terms of being hypotheses.

The first is the Involvement Hypothesis. This concept has its basis in human relations theory. It relies heavily on classical organizational behavior studies, such as Argyris' *Integrating the Individual and the Organization* (1964). Its fundamental argument is that:

> ... High levels of involvement and participation create a sense of ownership and responsibility. Out of this ownership grows a greater commitment to an organization and a lesser need for an overt control system. Voluntary and implicit normative systems ensure the coordination of behavior, rather than explicit bureaucratic control systems (Denison, 1990, p. 7).

High involvement also reduces transaction costs in an organization when members act because of some "intuitive value consensus," rather than because of set rules and regulations (p. 8).[4]

Second is the Consistency Hypothesis. The primary argument here is that shared meanings have a positive impact on the ability of organization members to reach consensus. Members who have internalized a common framework of values and beliefs are well socialized and more effective in achieving coordination, as opposed to having external control systems impose explicit rules and regulations. Highly consistent cultures have "highly committed employees, key central values, a distinctive method of doing business, a tendency to promote from within, and a clear set of 'do's and don'ts'" (Denison, 1990, p. 9). But highly committed employees and a strong culture do not alone mean that the organization is effective. Instead, these components must be closely associated with actual policies and practices. "The 'strong culture' hypothesis argues that there must be consistency between principles and behavior and a conformity to valued organizational practices" (p. 10).[5]

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[4] This is essentially the same argument that Camerer and Vepsalainen (1988) make regarding economic efficiency. Although it has engendered only moderate supporting evidence, Denison concluded that the hypothesis is "compelling" enough to remain in his theory of organizational culture and effectiveness.

[5] Denison emphasized that there is a distinction between "involvement" and "consistency" as follows:

Third is the Adaptability Hypothesis. This concept is also heavily rooted in organizational theory, but while most organizational theorists discussed the reactive position necessary for an organization to effectively deal with its environment, Denison (1990) focused on the necessity for a *pro*active position. In that regard, he argued that the system of norms and beliefs in an organization must be described in terms of the organization's ability to relate what it knows about its environment into behavioral changes that make the organization better able to survive, grow and develop. There are three aspects of adaptability that are supported, or not supported, by an organization's culture: (1) The ability to perceive and respond to the external environment and (2) to internal customers, plus (3) the capacity to "restructure" and "reinstitutionalize" those behaviors and processes that will allow an organization to adapt (p. 12).

Finally, the Mission Hypothesis has more to do with the strategic planning functions of an organization. Denison (1990) defines mission as "a shared definition of the function and purpose of an organization and its members" (p. 13), and describes two major influences that it provides on an organization's functioning. First, a mission provides a sense of purpose and meaning that enables an organization to internalize social roles and goals into individual and institutional roles. Second, a mission provides clarity and direction both at the organizational and individual levels (pp. 13-14).

The point that Denison (1990) makes by integrating these four hypotheses is that to be effective, a culture must have all of them. In other words, though each of the

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... The involvement hypothesis asserts that the inclusion and participation of members in the processes of the organization will outweigh the dissention, inconsistency, and nonconformity associated with a more democratic internal process. ... This process, given time to work, will result in "better" decisions and responses from an organization. Over time, better decisions should be associated with better performance.

Consistency theory, in contrast, would make the prediction that low levels of involvement and participation can be outweighed by high levels of consistency, conformity, and consensus. A high degree of normative integration, shared meaning, and a common frame of reference can increase an organization's capacity for coordinated action and promote a more rapid decision process.

hypotheses has a specific relationship to effectiveness, the combination exhibits synergy.

In the remainder of this paper, the model developed by Denison (1990) will be used to describe how the *Detroit Free Press* newsroom exemplifies an effective organizational culture, which was one of the factors that sustained journalists through the tumultuous period of anticipating, and then implementing, the JOA.

## METHOD

Research for the longer *Free Press* study was based on nearly 400 hours of field work over a period of eighteen months pre- and post-JOA in which the author was an overt participant observer[6] in the *Free Press* newsroom. This field work also included in depth interviews, pre- and post-JOA, with a group of thirty-one journalists across levels of management, along with the administration of a short opinion survey to the group, again, pre- and post-JOA. The work was supplemented by daily reading of the *Free Press* and its direct competitor, *The Detroit News*. Additional information sources include various *Free Press* in-house publications, and documents from the Detroit JOA administrative and legal proceedings.

The critical element of the methodology used to study the *Free Press* was the ability of this researcher to get close enough to the people being studied that their experiences would be faithfully reported, and to be enough a part of the organization being studied that it could be accurately understood. This researcher was given complete and unprecedented access to the *Free Press* newsroom and its staff.[7] But this "closeness" had its risks in that it had the potential to affect the researcher's ability to critically analyze the situation. Lofland (1971) recognized that this dilemma is endemic to the participant observation method:

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[6] Lofland (1971) has defined participant observation as a style of sociological research which requires the researcher to have physical proximity to the people being studied for a significant period of time, over which the researcher develops the kind of social closeness which allows attention to be paid to the "minutiae of daily life." The report produced must (a) describe truthfully what the researcher "in good faith believes actually went on; (b) "contain a significant amount of pure description of action, people, activities, and the like;" and (c) "contain direct quotations from the participants as they speak and/or from whatever they might write down" (pp. 3-4).

> The commitment to get close, to be factual, descriptive, and quotive, constitutes a significant commitment to represent the participants *in their own terms*. This does not mean that one becomes an apologist for them, but rather that one faithfully depicts what goes on in their lives and what life is like for them, in such a way that one's audience is at least partially able to project themselves into the point of view of the people depicted (p. 4).

In the case of this study, therefore, it was inevitable that spending so much time with the people being studied would result in this researcher getting to know and like many of the people being studied. This occurred despite the fact that constant attention was paid to remaining in the role of a disinterested observer. Yet, all of the journalists at the newspaper were fully aware of the researcher's purpose for being among them, and it was this constantly visible "difference" that was the ultimate check for the researcher to maintain an unbiased perspective in the analysis.

## DETROIT FREE PRESS NEWSROOM CULTURE

### Overview

Denison's (1990) theory of organizational culture and effectiveness demonstrated that the most successful organizations display all four of the "integrative principles" in their corporate cultures. Close observation of the *Detroit Free Press* editorial operations revealed that this "subgroup" of the newspaper's organizational culture qualifies under Denison's criteria as a strong and successful culture. This worked to the newspaper's advantage during the high stress and extreme uncertainty of the forty-three months from time of application for the Joint Operating Agreement to actual implementation, as well as in the months immediately following implementation. An organization which could not be classified as "successful," according to Denison's criteria, would not be expected to have been able to positively survive such continued morale bombardment.

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[7] An important factor in gaining this level of trust was the fact that those being studied knew that this researcher had earned an undergraduate degree in journalism and had professional experience as a journalist.

**Involvement Hypothesis**

A *Free Press* manager described the organizational norm for those who came to work at the newspaper. New employees "buy into the values here," the manager said. "They don't come here because they want to change them." What the manager seemed to be saying was that employees who want to work for the *Free Press* consciously acknowledge that the values of the organization mesh with their own personal values.[8]

Anticipatory socialization occurs in a more formal manner during the hiring process at the *Free Press*. The long-standing company policy of Knight-Ridder, the owner of the *Free Press*, is that each prospective employee, journalist or not, takes several standardized psychological and work profile tests.[9] In addition, those applying for journalistic positions take several other tests designed to rate their spelling, grammar, and vocabulary skills, and must also submit an autobiography and a critique of a recent issue of the *Free Press*. Armed with these data, decisions are then made as to which of the applicants will be invited to Detroit for an interview, where the anticipatory socialization process intensifies.

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[8] Socialization theory would indicate that this behavior can be generalized to also occur in other newsroom cultures where the autonomy of the individual journalist is an important factor in selecting like-minded colleagues and news organizations. But this important point was missed by organizational development specialist Chris Argyris (1974) in the application of his unique "intervention process" to top management news and editorial personnel at *The New York Times*. Argyris (1974) believed that his was a "one size fits all" theory that could help any organization become more effective in problem solving and decision making. But when he tried to change the prevailing characteristics of the *Times* newsroom -- extreme competitiveness, with editors low in trust and using win-lose dynamics -- he failed, precisely because he did not recognize that these were the very elements that defined the *Times* newsroom organizational culture, which culture he neither acknowledged nor studied. Argyris' (1974) "fatal flaw" was his failure to recognize that competition and win-lose dynamics (the constant reaching for a journalistic "scoop"), and low trust (universal journalistic skepticism) were part of the journalistic organizational culture at *The Times*, and that a program to change interpersonal relationships among managers needed to take into account the fact that conflict was a cultural norm here.

[9] Those used in the eighteen months of this study were the Guilford-Zimmerman Temperament Survey, which analyzes personality traits, and the Watson-Glaser Critical Thinking test, which analyzes particular work skills. The former is designed to screen out people with serious psychological problems, while the latter purportedly shows the specific kind of job for which a person is best suited.

Applicants interview one-on-one with as many as ten existing *Free Press* staffers, from the Executive Editor through Managing Editors and Department heads, and down the ranks to other reporters and/or assistant editors. There is no fixed list of interviewers. Rather, a list is "tailor-made" for the individual who is being considered. The objective from the organization's point of view is that diverse opinions should be solicited from staffers who would be in the same department with the applicant, as well as from those in other departments, and from others across the levels of management. Once a decision is made to hire an applicant, the person is given a "try out" period, the duties of which vary for each particular job. Altogether, the hiring process makes it clear for new recruits what the newspaper is and what it expects of them.

This socialization process is important because there are few written rules at the newspaper. Though all new employees are given a copy of the *Free Press* Code of Ethics[10] and a copy of the *Free Press* Style Manual,[11] only copy editors receive further written instructions.[12] John S. Knight, founder of the management group which owns the *Free Press*, was famous for his policy of hiring good people and then letting them do their jobs, without him or any other person in top management looking over their shoulders. The continuance of that philosophy at the *Free Press* is dependent on the early socialization of new members to the values of the organization.

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[10] First codified in the early 1980s when David Lawrence was Executive Editor, the ethics code was based on suggestions made by professional journalism and public relations associations, and reflects contemporary ethical norms as accepted by professional practitioners nationwide.

[11] Every newspaper has its own style manual, which gives specific examples of grammar usage and of consistency in references to people, places, and particular issues. While the JOA was still pending, a major revision of the *Free Press* Style Manual took place. One remarkable aspect of that Manual is that the Chief of the Copy Desk wrote a *Free Press* news article explaining how and why it was produced. And, reflective of the *Free Press* newsroom organizational culture, he invited readers to write him with their suggestions.

During the long struggle to gain the JOA, *Free Press* employees became even more committed to "their" organization. Some may argue that journalistic professionalism alone was responsible for the stability of the *Free Press* newsroom during this struggle. But prolonged uncertainty changes things that not even solid professionalism can counter. Journalists who work for years under a "siege mentality" need something more than their professional values to bolster them during stressful times. They need the sense of family, of sharing on a personal level, and of having something larger than themselves in which they can believe. This is what the *Free Press* newsroom culture provides.

This sense of family prompted a phenomenal move that directly contradicts the norm of journalistic detachment from a story. A large group of present and former *Free Press* journalists decided to become part of the JOA story by filing a separate brief with the U.S. Supreme Court as it was preparing to hold oral arguments on the challenge by opponents of the U.S. Attorney General's approval of the Detroit JOA (Brief of *Amici Curiae*, 1989). This decision was not made by the newspaper's management. Of the forty-three journalists who filed as "friends of the court," only four were in the ranks of management, and all four at that time no longer worked at the *Free Press*.[13] Of the group, nearly half were at the level of reporter (or photographer, or graphics specialist), about one-fourth were editors, and about one-sixth were columnists. Twenty-eight of the group were male; fifteen were female. The high involvement expressed by the journalists' brief saved a considerable amount of "transaction costs" for the *Free Press* organization in its fight to gain the JOA. The organization was in desperate need for some visible sign of support from its employees, and by means of the legal brief, a cross-section of journalistic employees provided that support.

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[12] Because of the precise nature of the work of copy editors, a special set of written materials is given them when they first begin the job, and an ongoing set of written materials is provided via the computer system as new problems are resolved and worked into copy editing policy.

[13] One was Neal Shine, who had recently retired at the level of Senior Managing Editor, and would later come out of retirement to be Publisher. The others were former *Free Press* employees who, at that time, were in the following management posi-

But irrespective of the JOA, "high involvement" also existed on a day-by-day basis at the *Free Press* by people who did things because it "seemed like the right thing to do." For example, a Reader Representative personally delivered a newspaper to a customer who had been missed by the carrier because, in the Representative's own words, it "seemed like the right thing to do." And a *Free Press* reporter, after writing about the hundreds of people killed in the Detroit crash of Northwest Flight 255, attended some of the victims' funerals on personal, not company, time.

Doing the "right thing" has a strong tradition at the *Free Press*. Current publisher, and 30-year *Free Press* veteran, Neal Shine tells many stories about the generosity of staffers who have helped each other and their readers. For example, during a particularly long strike in the 1960s, the Executive Editor at the time quietly provided funds for City Editor Shine to distribute among striking staffers who were having financial trouble. And even during the JOA turmoil, a different Executive Editor made a similar offer to a staffer who had a personal emergency. Shine said that ordinary people from all over the city, and often, even members of the police department, would tell people in trouble, "Go to the *Free Press*. They can help you." One story from the 1970s was particularly heartwarming:

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tions at other newspapers: Gene Roberts, Executive Editor of the *Philadelphia Inquirer*; Charles Fancher, Director of Communication for the Philadelphia Newspaper Agency; and Robert Maynard, Owner and Publisher of the *Oakland Tribune* (Ironically, Maynard's daughter, Dori, worked for the *Free Press* at this time, but she did not sign the brief).

> I got a call one day from a Mopar salesman. He was selling fan belts to some gas station out on the west side in a bad neighborhood, and there was a little girl in there, a teenager, crying and looking through the phone book. And he asked her what was wrong, and she said that she was from New York and she had come here to find her father, who she hadn't seen since she was three or four, because her parents were divorced. She had taken her graduation money and left her mother a note and said "I'm going to find my father. I want to see him." And she thought all she had to do was come to Detroit and look in the phone book. She looked in the phone book, got his name and took a cab out to the house and it was not him. It was a black family, she was white. So they looked in the phone book and there were no other names with that same name, same initials, and they told her to look in the suburban books but they didn't have any, so she went to the gas station and she was looking through the suburban books, and there were no names and she was crying because she was frightened and alone.
>
> So this salesman asked her what was wrong and she told him and so he called his office, Chrysler Corporation, and he ended up talking to PR, and the PR guy said "call Neal Shine at the *Free Press*. He'll know what to do." So he called me and I said "where is she, I'll send somebody to get her," and he said "I'll bring her down." He brought her in and she was frightened. We sat her down and the first thing -- I was trying to determine whether this was how she earned her living -- but it didn't take me long to figure out that she did not. I took her up to Action Line [a problem solving feature of the newspaper in the 1970s] and explained what her problem was. They know how to find people through Social Security but Social Security won't tell you where they are. They'll forward mail. So for three or four days she came in to work everyday and she stayed with the woman who ran the department -- at home, she brought her home. She called her mother and said "she's all right, she's living with me." Social Security said send us a letter addressed to him, put the Social Security Number on it and we'll forward it to him, if he's alive. Then they called back and said that he was alive, that he was not deceased, and they would forward it, but they didn't say where. She had put down her phone number here, so she came in everyday and they made her work. They made her clip things and paste things up for them. And she was a delightful child! And then she got a letter from her father in Kentucky, and I got a call from him, and everybody in the room was crying and she said she wanted to come and see him. He didn't have any money to send for her and he said that he was going to try to borrow some, and the staff said not to worry and they took up a collection. They bought her a plane ticket. And I tried to buy it on behalf of the *Free Press* and I said "tell me what the ticket costs," and the staff said "no, it feels better that we did it." So she went and met her father.

To make the story complete, Shine reported that years later, when the young girl got married, all the staff who had helped her were invited to the wedding. From a journalistic point of view, this little saga would have made a great feature story, but the *Free Press* staff didn't exploit it. There was one small item in the Action Line column about the staff's ability to find the father through the Social Security office, but the staff's personal involvement with the young girl was not publicized beyond the confines of the organization. That was the "right thing to do" in terms of the *Free Press* newsroom organizational culture.

**Consistency Hypothesis**

A consistent culture, where members have shared meanings, promotes organizational consensus without the need for externally imposed rules and regulations. This is well-exemplified by the *Detroit Free Press* newsroom culture in several instances.

The brief filed by a group of *Free Press* journalists before the U.S. Supreme Court by itself exhibited that these employees were highly committed to their organization. The brief described the distinctive method by which the *Free Press* "did business" and how the organizational values expressed in this distinctive method meshed with those of the journalists. The brief spoke to the uniqueness of the *Free Press* in Detroit, and to the newspaper's cultural history:

> Two blocks apart, in a downtown Detroit neighborhood of asphalt parking lots and boarded-up hotels, two neon newspaper logos glow against the night sky. Physically, the buildings occupied by the *Detroit Free Press* and the *Detroit News* are on the same street; philosophically, they are a world apart.
>
> ... The two papers have dramatically different visions of the world. Historically, the *Free Press* has been a force for reform and defender of the disadvantaged, while the *Detroit News* has been the community's voice for restraint and conservatism.
>
> ... The difference between the two papers in Detroit are most visible on their editorial pages, where the *News* and the *Free Press* regularly disagree on everything from how to take out the trash to how to resolve the most fundamental social and political issues of the age. ... In recent years, the two papers have expressed opposing views on abortion, transportation, welfare policy, campaign financing, utility and insurance regulation, Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan. They have differed on the MX missile, the Grenada invasion, the causes of crime, the minimum wage, the validity of the independent prosecutor law, the workings of the Michigan presidential primary, and the best means of opposing apartheid in South Africa (Brief of *Amici Curiae*, 1989, pp. 12-13).

The journalists' brief devoted considerable space to a discussion of the *Free Press* coverage of the Detroit race riots, and of its concern for race relations -- they noted that three of the newspaper's eight Pulitzer Prizes were awarded for this kind of coverage. Additionally, the brief noted the contribution of investigative reporting by the *Free Press*, some of which also earned the Pulitzer Prize, while clearly spelling out what are the key central values of the organization:

> ... The measure of a great newspaper is its ability to publish exclusive stories of great importance and its willingness to take unpopular editorial positions early in the debate. The *Free Press* continues to meet this measure by leading the Detroit community in exposing injustices and demanding social reforms (Brief of *Amici Curiae*, 1989, p. 17).

Examples given to support that conclusion included: (1) A *Free Press* series exposing "a pattern of racially discriminatory lending practices by Detroit banks," which "prompted" a $3 billion financial commitment to home loans by area banks. (2) A series on Michigan's extremely high infant death rate, which "motivated" the Michigan legislature's expenditure of $2.5 million for prenatal care and nutrition. (3) A series exposing problems in the treatment of juvenile offenders, which was followed within a year by the enactment of a Michigan statute making public juvenile court proceedings (pp. 17-18).[14]

It is not only such "high-minded" examples which show *Free Press* employees' values. Daily, sometimes mundane issues of news judgment demonstrate that the organization has a clear set of do's and don'ts. When serial killer Ted Bundy was executed, *Weekly World News*, a national tabloid newspaper, obtained pictures of Bundy's corpse -- with typical journalistic humor, *Free Press* staffers labelled these pictures as the "Dead Ted." But to add to the issue -- which as one staffer said was on a certain level funny, but on another level "disgusting" -- the prospect of the *Free Press* running the photographs was proposed at the regular news budget meeting. At first, staffers thought this was just a joke, but the individual who raised the question was making a serious attempt to provoke discussion among the newsroom's decision makers as to how they really felt about doing this kind of thing. One journalist commented in some depth about the issue:

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[14] It should be noted that these various examples were written and edited by some of those who signed the *amici* brief.

> It's a taste matter. Are you pandering to the lowest common denominator? I'm sure there are people that buy those papers just to see those pictures because *Weekly World News* is sold out all over. We wouldn't run it, I don't think, and I don't think we should. I don't want to get high-minded about this, but I think you can argue that that's fine for a paper like *Weekly World News*, where you know that's basically there, they might be doing that -- you expect something like that, outrageous sometimes. I don't think most people who subscribe to the *Free Press* expect it to run that kind of picture.
>
> Is it newsworthy? If it's going to offend some sensibilities then you better have a real good substantive "news-peg" reason to run it. And I'm not sure you could make any argument other than they're wild photos. I find I don't like to look at them. It's that I feel a little soiled.
>
> But we had plenty of calls. We ran an item telling about the *Weekly World News* in "Names and Faces" [the light gossip feature in the newspaper]. We had all these calls and people said "Where can I get that?" You say, who is calling and wanting to see those pictures? Well how many of them are there? Again you've got to use judgment that you've built up over years of experience. I think you'd have to say first of all there's a taste issue, it's going to offend sensibilities. Therefore, there's got to be a news angle to get those in the paper. And, I don't think there is one.

The discussion about news judgment and running the photographs was taken up in various circles at the newspaper, at all levels of management. It was interesting to observe, because, though no one seriously considered trying to obtain rights to the photos, all seemed to go through some type of self-examination before they gave their reasons why they would never consider publishing the pictures. Ultimately, everyone decided that despite potential reader interest, despite possible news value, this was just not something the *Free Press* should print. It was not the "right thing to do" from the standpoint of the newsroom organizational culture.

A final matter of consistency in an organization is its tendency to promote from within. At the *Free Press*, this is best exemplified by current publisher Neal Shine, who began work as a copy boy and rose through the ranks of reporter, City Editor, and Managing Editor. There are other examples as well, including the promotion from within of a current Managing Editor, and at lower levels, of major section editors who rose from the ranks of bureau chiefs and other diverse reporting assignments.

**Adaptability Hypothesis**

There is a need for an organization to have a proactive approach to dealing with its external environment and its internal customers, while maintaining the capacity to restructure processes and behaviors that enable an organization to adapt, thus increasing its chances for survival, growth, and development (Denison, 1990, pp. 11-12).

External Environment -- To be successful, a newspaper must meet the specific needs of its immediate audience. During the period of this study, the *Free Press* had an effective program for monitoring its community. This was a "Meet the Editors" forum, held periodically at various locations in the Detroit metropolitan area in which top newsroom executives were available for direct questioning by readers. At a forum in early June 1989, readers questioned the Executive Editor, the two Managing Editors, the Associate Editor of the Editorial Page, the Reader Representative, the General Manager, and the Circulation Zone Manager.[15] During this particular forum, *Free Press* staffers spent a considerable amount of time explaining in detail how stories were written. One of the last questions asked was how journalists applied their "news judgment" to stories, and how readers could contribute to their decision making. The Executive Editor first revealed all the direct phone numbers of the managers and editors present, and then invited members of the audience to visit a *Free Press* daily planning meeting. The invitation was genuine, and it wasn't really unusual. On a number of occasions community members sat in on the meetings. Not only was necessary business accomplished without significant disruption, but the staff did not act much differently than when there were no visitors around.[16] At this particular Meet the Editors forum, there seemed to be a genuine exchange of ideas between the *Free Press* staff and the audience, but apparently, not all meetings ended so cordially. Some time later, several staff members relayed the details of a particularly rancorous exchange at a forum, which the staff promptly renamed "Beat the Editors" night. That did not, however, cause any lessened commitment to this kind of effort to monitor the external environment. In the eighteen months post-JOA, announcements continued to appear in the *Free Press* for future forums.

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[15] In other forums, the cast of characters varied slightly depending on individual schedules.

Additionally, as part of the Knight-Ridder group of newspapers, the *Free Press* reaps the benefit of national research conducted by the parent organization, which research it can adapt to serve the needs of its specific community. Pre-JOA, the parent group launched a "customer obsession" program designed to better meet the needs of readers and advertisers. Post-JOA, Knight-Ridder announced a higher level program to measure customer satisfaction (Radolf, 1989). Both programs were directed towards maintaining and increasing readership and advertising in a rapidly changing environment. Additionally, a Knight-Ridder "Baby Boomers Project" was directed at redesigning newspapers to attract young adult readers, a segment of newspaper readership nationally that has been seriously underrepresented. By October 1990, Knight-Ridder announced that it was testing concepts developed in the project at *The News* in Boca Raton, Florida. Making "heavy use of color, maps and indexes, eyecatching graphics and clean lines," the announcement was that "trendy stories will be the norm" (Wilson, 1990, p. 3E). Simultaneously, the *Free Press* Executive Editor reported that many former and current *Free Press* employees were involved in the project, and that ideas which withstood the Boca Raton test would end up in the *Free Press* (p. 3E).

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[16] Perhaps the language used was not as "colorful" when visitors were present. On one occasion, when a woman and three young girls attended the meetings (as part of a "prize" they had won in a local raffle), some of the more "plain-speaking" staffers toned down their rhetoric somewhat.

Internal Environment -- The *Free Press* "Dr. Risk" program is an example of a formalized means whereby top management attempts to learn what is of concern to those in the lower ranks. In early 1989, a person who would not normally be there was added to the decision-making process of the daily "budget" meetings. The management objective was twofold: (a) To empower those who would not normally take part in the process, and (b) to shake up the traditional thinking, and often vested interests, of those who regularly participated in the process. The idea implemented a solution to two major concerns of the newspaper brought about both by the declining state of the newspaper industry and the morale-sapping drawn-out legal proceedings with the JOA: (1) the organizational need to open communications among staffers, and (2) the business need to "connect with" readers. Each "Dr. Risk" was given a two-week assignment to go beyond the responsibilities of his or her regular job to (a) seek out stories that would challenge traditional assumptions of what should be on the front page, and (b) to approach all stories from a reader's perspective in terms of what information would be necessary to make the story more "interesting" and a "must read."

The Dr. Risk concept was not necessary to stimulate debate over news judgment decisions at the newspaper -- such debate had long been a major component of the *Free Press* newsroom culture. Instead, the concept helped the organization internally by allowing people who would not otherwise be a part of regular news decision making to have a formal voice in the process. That is, first and foremost, a message from a large organization that individuals matter, and that if people are made to feel they are empowered, they will act as if they were empowered. But another important benefit to the organization of the Dr. Risk concept was the insight it allowed those who have filled that role into the very difficult jobs that editors have every day in making news decisions. Anecdotal evidence abounds among the various Dr. Risk staffers as to how much they learned about the process, and how much renewed respect they have for people who have to do this every day, rather than only for a two-week stint. One staffer reported:

> I actually came out of those meetings with more respect for those people than when I went in, because I had been told going in that they were a bunch of fools and they don't know what to do. And actually, I saw what they have to struggle with every day.

Coming to a better understanding of other people's roles in an organization is beneficial for both the individual -- who comes to know her or himself best by having a multiplicity of roles in life[17] -- and for the organization, because collegiality in decision making is increased whenever individuals are able to put themselves in the roles of others while presenting their own positions.

But the formal "Dr. Risk" program supplemented informal ones at the *Free Press* which have long been part of the journalists' efforts to monitor and resolve internal concerns. For one thing, there has always been a good system of "mentoring" in place at the *Free Press*, whereby older employees help newer ones to adapt and grow with the organization. Current publisher Neal Shine, for example, who has been at the *Free Press* for more than three decades in a variety of positions, has been the quintessential mentor for many editorial employees.

On another front, there is the matter of journalistic professionalism, including, in particular, a strong sense of autonomy. Because of their professional training, as well as their ongoing monitoring of journalistic norms nationwide, journalists are more likely to take a forward role in expressing concerns and offering suggestions to resolve them than are other professionals within an organization. The organization benefits from this if it has a strategic plan to deal with these concerns and suggestions. At the *Free Press*, the strategic plan is to have collegial decision making be the newsroom cultural norm.

In the early 1970s, Johnstone and his colleagues (Johnstone, 1976; and Johnstone, Slawski, and Bowman, 1976) were concerned that increasing centralization in the news industry was causing an erosion in individual journalistic autonomy. This study showed that large organizations specialized the work of an individual journalist to the extent that the individual had less control, and thus less autonomy in that kind of a setting. Additionally, Johnstone found that these factors in large news organizations affected journalists' morale to the point that they were less satisfied than were those in smaller organizations. Drawing upon sociological literature about the alienation effects of the "bureaucratization of newswork," Johnstone (1976) concluded that the introduction of computer technology would further denigrate "the needs of individual professionals for autonomy and a voice in organizational decision making" (p. 13). Weaver and Wilhoit (1991) replicated the work of Johnstone and his colleagues (1976) and found that autonomy remained very important for journalists, who perceived they had less of that autonomy in 1982-83 than they did in 1971, though they still felt they had the ability to get important stories reported (Weaver & Wilhoit, 1991, p. 216).

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[17] For a full discussion of this concept, see Coser, 1975.

Johnstone and his colleagues (1976) reported that the sociological answer to the perception of journalists having less autonomy was to decentralize authority and create smaller and more autonomous work units (p. 184). This was not precisely what was done at the *Free Press*, yet the journalists there reflect an important exception to the autonomy norm Johnstone had identified. A plausible reason for this exception is the *Free Press* newsroom culture. It is true that, in the ninth largest metropolitan daily newspaper in the U.S., there is bound to be a great deal of individual specialization in jobs. If people remained in only one of those many jobs for their entire careers at the newspaper, they most probably would feel that they didn't have very much control over decision making. But the norm at the *Free Press* is that people don't often remain at the same job for their entire time with the newspaper. Not only do reporters move from beat to beat, but reporters move to editors, and sometimes editors move back to reporters, and sometimes those from the news operation move to the Editorial Page and back again, and sometimes both editors and reporters move to the Sunday magazine staff and back again. There are a multitude of other variations as well. There are many "rotating" positions at the *Free Press*, with some moves being institutionalized, such as a three-month rotating position on the Sunday magazine. Others occur because of vacations, illness, and temporary leaves by some employees.

Because it is part of the newsroom culture at the *Free Press* to move around in various roles, individual journalists gain a more cosmopolitan, rather than parochial, perspective on the work of the organization as a whole. This benefits the organization by producing employees who are versatile and able to approach decision making from a variety of perspectives. Additionally, this benefits individual journalists by increasing their personal autonomy. In essence, this part of the *Free Press* newsroom culture blunts the negative effects of large organizations in general. The *Free Press* newsroom culture also helps blunt the negative effects that often come from an "us vs. them" perspective of reporters vs. editors. Reporters understand what their job is, and most importantly, they understand they are not editors. They may complain a lot about an individual editor who "mangles" their copy, but this doesn't change their basic philosophy that each side has a particular job to do. What happens also in the *Free Press* newsroom culture is that journalists know they always have the opportunity to view the process from another perspective, should they so choose, which helps individuals at the *Free Press* achieve greater job satisfaction than might be expected at a paper of its size.

Restructuring -- Because of the nature of the newspaper business, whereby every day brings new challenges, the skill of restructuring is well honed in the *Free Press* newsroom -- this is an inherent part of being a journalist. Depending on what may happen with late-breaking news, editors and reporters must scramble to accommodate the new priorities while continually reshuffling the old ones. General Assignment reporters especially have to be available at a moment's notice to "shift gears," and News and Copy Desk Editors must always be prepared to constantly reorganize or reedit copy as needs dictate.

One good example of the ability of the *Free Press* News Desk staff to "roll with the punches" on a day-by-day basis occurred on an evening about six months after the JOA began. The "big" breaking story that night was the second game of the NBA Championship Finals, with the Detroit Pistons playing in Oregon against the Portland Trail Blazers. The game would not end until well past the established deadlines for the second of three daily editions published by the *Free Press*. Editors had decided that, win or lose, the story would be played on the front page, along with a commentary by the newspaper's award-winning sports columnist, Mitch Albom. The front page layout was determined accordingly, and all other portions were edited, printed, and stripped into place awaiting the final two stories.

But just as News Desk editors were anticipating transmittal of Albom's copy from Oregon to the *Free Press*, they learned that his computer had "eaten" the story in the process. Over the space of the next sixty minutes, the remaining newsroom staff had to scramble to (a) find a replacement for Albom's column in the event that it had been totally lost, (b) readjust the page one layout for a replacement story, (c) call the Managing Editor for News at home to ask him to bargain with the joint production facility for even later deadlines than had previously been negotiated, (c) edit the main Pistons story (which came through on the wire service without a problem), (d) edit the first "reconstructed" version of the Albom column (he quickly rewrote what he could remember and transmitted that while he tried to reconstruct a better column), (e) select a game photograph and try to write a caption for action the editors had not witnessed, and (f) edit the better, reconstructed version of the Albom column (he successfully rewrote his rewrite). The presses were held, the "real Mitch" column finally appeared, and for the *Free Press* newsroom staff, as for any group of experienced journalists, it was just another night's work in the norm of the practice.

However, during the JOA trauma *Free Press* journalists also exhibited considerable skill in restructuring in matters outside the norm of their practice. In the early preparation for the joint operating agreement, staffers from all sections of the newspaper had to plan changes in the physical structure of the newspaper. Additionally, restructuring of sometimes major proportions continued after the JOA officially began. One striking example involved the press configuration for the *Free Press* under joint production. When the JOA was originally proposed, editors planned to standardize the layout of the various sections of the newspaper, adding certain features, and presenting them in a specific pattern. No one on the business side of the newspaper, which was responsible for the technical execution of this plan, voiced any criticism of it. But four years later, on the eve of actually beginning production under the JOA, the business-side person in charge of ad makeup informed the newsroom-side editor in charge of production that the plan to standardize the placement of newspaper content simply would not work because of the physical limitations of the printing presses.[18] Since the thematic ordering of sections, along with consistent placement of regular features, was of great importance journalistically, and since the position of the business-side staff continued to be that "this isn't going to work," the newsroom-side editor was left with the problem of resolving the matter. Despite the fact that this activity is not the job of a journalist, the particular editor involved actually learned to perform the intricacies of a very technical, business-side function, solely to find a mechanical solution to implement the journalistically-desired product. With a certain amount of trial and error, the editor was ultimately successful, and the desired layout of newspaper content was finally achieved in the *Free Press* within the first two months of production under the JOA.

**Mission Hypothesis**

Though its business operations are now merged with those of *The Detroit News*, the *Detroit Free Press* newsroom still maintains its fiercely independent spirit. Journalists continue their commitment to the local community, and they continue to strive for excellence in bringing news of the rest of the world to the Detroit area. *Free Press* staffers delight in enumerating the eight Pulitzer Prizes in the newspaper's history, especially when they note that their arch rival, *The News*, has won only two.

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[18] Basically, these limitations are due to the fact that the printing presses at the *Free Press* are not all of the same design, and thus have different "configurations" in terms of what can be printed (*e.g.*, color), and where it can be printed (*e.g.*, front of a weekly rotating section).

In interviews with *Free Press* journalists, it is clear that it is what the newspaper is that has attracted employees to it. Many *Free Press* journalists said there is a distinct difference between a "*Free Press* person" and a "*News* person." One articulated this difference best:

> Neal Shine could never be a *Detroit News* person. A lot of people here could never be *Detroit News* people. We're just *Free Press* people. There was a person from the *News* who recently interviewed for a job here. I said to another staffer, "that person is never going to be part of the *Free Press* family. That person is just not the type."
>
> The *Detroit News* person was ambitious about work. The person was work-oriented but doesn't seem community oriented -- community in the sense of, "let's as a team do this," or "let's as a group do this," or "let's try to achieve this noble goal," and plus, this person was coming from *The News*. This sort of key dynamic in most of us is "let's produce a better newspaper than they do." I can't imagine coming over from there to here and buying into that notion since you've just been over there. It seems to me that anybody who could make the switch, is not really into the program, hasn't really committed himself or herself.

The perception expressed in the foregoing comment about how individual *Free Press* staffers have a shared definition of the organization's purpose, translates into the kind of intense editorial competition with *The News* that the Detroit JOA did not diminish. It also translates into a shared vision of the values that are important for a staffer to be a "*Free Press* type of person."

## CONCLUSIONS

Certainly, there exist other possible explanations for the successful survival of newspaper organizations in periods of great organizational stress. Two such possibilities immediately come to mind, but these do not fully explain the situation at the *Detroit Free Press* during the four years of turmoil preceding operation under a joint operating agreement with *The Detroit News.*

First is the matter of journalistic professionalism, whereby journalists strive to do their best work despite any adverse circumstances that might be created by their place of employment. Such professionalism definitely played a part at the *Free Press*, but as the primary explanatory force, it is seriously lacking because a group of professional journalists made a significant departure from professional norms by filing an *amici* brief before the U.S. Supreme Court in favor of the Detroit JOA. The second possible explanation is the potential strength in times of crisis that can be provided by a stable cadre of top managers in a newspaper organization. Certainly, specific beneficial actions have been implemented at other newspapers by an individual publisher, an executive editor, or a managing editor. But at the *Free Press* during the four years of uncertainty about the joint operating agreement, different individuals occupied each of these top positions at different times during the process. It is a long shot at best to attempt to demonstrate that two different publishers, two different executive editors, and three different managing editors could together successfully sustain a high level of morale at the *Free Press* during this period of great stress. Indeed, some of those in these top leadership positions during these four years were perceived by staff members as particularly unhelpful in managing the crisis.

Instead, the objective of this paper has been to demonstrate that the strength of the *Detroit Free Press* newsroom culture helped journalists survive the major organizational change to production under the JOA. Placing information from newsroom observations and interviews into the model developed in the larger study shows that because the newsroom culture was "effective," as defined by Denison (1990), *Free Press* journalists were able to sustain the distinctive elements of the newspaper. Denison (1990) asserted that the most successful organizations display all four of his "integrative principles" in their corporate cultures. This paper has demonstrated that the *Detroit Free Press* newsroom culture has earned the right of that distinction.

The experience of the *Free Press* can be applied to other newspapers as well as to other kinds of news organizations. If it can be demonstrated that an organization is an example of Denison's (1990) "effective" culture, that organization can expect to safely weather powerful changes in its environment. Organizations that are staffed by professionals who expect to be given a great deal of autonomy can especially benefit from an effective organizational culture since fewer formal rules would be necessary to operate the organization, and would thus not restrict the work of the professionals. Overall, organizations with effective cultures could expect environmental change to affect the physical structure of the organization, but without destroying the individual nature of its members. As one *Free Press* journalist stated some six months after the implementation of the joint operating agreement, "I did not change. The JOA did not rearrange me."

Management should not become overconfident, however, in believing that employees who are not adversely affected by major change actually approve of the details of the change. What was very clear at the end of the longer study of the *Free Press* was that the journalists liked the results of the JOA -- that their newspaper was able to stay in business -- but they fiercely disliked the idea of a JOA at their newspaper or anywhere else. The support that the journalists had provided during the JOA process was for no other reason than it was the only way they could see to preserve the *Free Press* organizational culture.

In summary, managers of news organizations can realize benefits from their organizational culture in times of change and/or stress only if that culture is "effective," as that concept is developed by Denison (1990). This presumes that managers and professional employees have both a solid understanding of the core values of their culture, and the desire to preserve those values in every organizational action they undertake.

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# The Effects of Work Environment on Job Burnout in Newspaper Reporters and Copy Editors

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# The Effects of Work Environment on Job Burnout in Newspaper Reporters and Copy Editors

## Abstract

This study applied two psychological tests to measure the relationship between work environment and job burnout in 120 reporters and copy editors at ten daily newspapers.

Certain subscales of the work environment measure significantly related to job burnout. Also, copy editors were found to be less satisfied with their work environment and scored higher job burnout than reporters.

Implications for newspaper managers are discussed, including methods for increasing a positive work environment. Recommendations are made concerning the role of copy editors.

# The Effects of Work Environment on Job Burnout in Newspaper Reporters and Copy Editors

This study explored the effects of work environment factors on job burnout in a sample of 120 daily newspaper reporters and copy editors who work with news copy. The study also looked at the effect of moderating factors such as sex, age, salary, years of experience and education on the relationship between work environment and job burnout. Finally, the study looked at the differences in the perceptions of work environment and job burnout between reporters and copy editors.

## Literature Review

As studies on job burnout increase, the need to establish the relative importance of contributing factors becomes apparent. Research findings have linked a number of environmental factors to burnout.[1] The social climate of the work setting has frequently been identified as a powerful environmental correlate of burnout. In settings where workers feel supported and appreciated by administrators and supervisors, burnout levels are low.[2] Other studies have linked "psychogenic" illness in several industrial plants to work environment.[3] High burnout levels have been associated with job turnover, increased health risks and high work pressure.

Job burnout studies have had a relatively brief history. Freudenberger[4] indicated

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[1] Victor Savicki and Eric Cooley, "The Relationship of Work Environment and Client Contact to Burnout in Mental Health Professionals," Journal of Counseling and Development, 65:249-252 (January 1987).

[2] Cary B. Barad, Study of Burnout Syndrome Among SSA Field Public Contact Employees, (Washington, D.C.: Social Security Administration, Office of Management, Budget and Personnel, Office of Human Resources, 1979).

[3] Rudolph H. Moos, "Creating Healthy Human Contexts" in Prevention in Health Psychology, James C. Rosen and Laura J. Solomon, eds. (Hanover, VT: University Press of New England, 1985), p. 368.

[4] Herbert J. Freudenberger, "The Staff Burnout Syndrome in Alternative Institutions," Psychotherapy: Theory, Research and Practice, 12:72-83 (Spring 1975).

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that job burnout is a syndrome of physical and emotional exhaustion produced by excessive demands on the energy, strength and resources of the individual. A relationship among job satisfaction, job burnout and job attrition has previously been noted.[5] It would appear that job satisfaction, job stress, job burnout and job attrition form a behavioral continuum. Symptoms include emotional exhaustion, psychosomatic complaints, treatment of co-workers as objects, and low levels of job satisfaction and personal accomplishment. When these responses persist over time they develop into a syndrome labeled "job burnout".[6] Job burnout can be characterized as a type of withdrawal syndrome from work.

The experimental study of job burnout has been influenced by the development of the Maslach Burnout Inventory.[7] This inventory, designed to measure job burnout, has three subscales: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. Emotional exhaustion is defined as the feeling of being emotionally overextended and exhausted by one's work. Depersonalization is defined as an unfeeling and impersonal response toward the recipients of one's service, treatment or instruction. Personal accomplishment is defined as a feeling of competence and successful achievement in one's work with people. Individuals who demonstrate burnout have high levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization with low levels of personal accomplishment.

One of the underlying assumptions of the Maslach Burnout Inventory is that it has some type of predictive relationship with job attrition. Thus, one purpose of measuring job burnout is to develop some type of profile of who is "at risk" for leaving the job.

Job stress and its relationship to the work environment has been studied extensively by Moos and his colleagues. Moos has explored the fundamental characteristics of social environments to identify and determine stress factors and how individuals avoid and alleviate stress. Moos defines the social climate of an organization as the personality of a setting or environment, such as a family, office or classroom.[8] For example, like some people, some social environments are friendlier than others, Moos states. Some environments encourage achievement and competition. Others are rigid and controlling.

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[5] Michael R. Daley, "Burnout: Smouldering Problem in Protective Services," Social Work, 24:375-379 (September 1979).

[6] Christina Maslach and Susan E. Jackson, Maslach Burnout Inventory Manual, 2nd ed. (Palo Alto, Ca.: Consulting Psychologists Press, 1986), p. 1.

[7] Christina Maslach and Susan E. Jackson, Maslach Burnout Inventory, (Palo Alto, Ca.: Consulting Psychologists Press, 1981).

Social climate can have a strong influence on people in a setting. Research has shown how climate affects each person's behavior, feelings, growth, morale, aspirations and other personal characteristics.[9] A heavy work load and time pressure have been related to psychosomatic complaints, anxiety, depression and cardiovascular distress.[10, 11] Role ambiguity or lack of clarity about job roles and criteria of adequate performance of specific tasks has been associated with job dissatisfaction, anxiety, and employee turnover.[12] Other studies have found that high supervisor control in conjunction with lack of opportunity to participate in decision-making and in organizing and pacing the work load may also impair employee well-being.[13, 14]

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[8] Rudolph H. Moos, The Social Climate Scales: A User's Guide, (Palo Alto, Ca.: Consulting Psychologists Press, 1987), p. 2.

[9] Rudolph H. Moos, p. 2.

[10] John R.P. French and Robert D. Caplan, "Organizational Stress and Individual Strain," in The Failure of Success, Alfred J. Marrow, ed. (New York: AMACOM, 1973).

[11] James S. House, Anthony J. McMichael, Jami A. Wells, Berton H. Kaplan and Lawrence R. Landerman, "Occupational Stress Among Factory Workers," Journal of Health and Social Behavior, 20:139-160, (1979).

[12] Robert D. Caplan, Sidney Cobb, John R.P. French, R.Van Harrison and S R. Pinneau, Job Demands and Workers Health: Main Effects and Occupational Differences, (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan, 1980).

[13] Cary L. Cooper and Judi Marshall "Sources of Managerial and White Collar Stress," in Stress at Work,(New York: Wiley, 1978).

[14] Tom Cox, "Repetitive Work," in Current Concerns In Occupational Stress, Cary L. Cooper and Roy Payne, eds. (New York: Wiley, 1980).

Other studies have linked the concepts of burnout and work environment. In one, work pressure and clarity as measured by the Work Environment Scale were strongly correlated with the emotional exhaustion scale on the Maslach Burnout Inventory.[15]

Savicki and Cooley found that work environments associated with high burnout are those that restrict freedom and flexibility and deemphasize planning and efficiency.[16] Such results also replicate the findings of other researchers, who have used a variety of assessment approaches with a variety of different vocations such as child care workers and mental health workers.[17]

Although there is not much research in the area of job stress among journalists, there is some research in the area of job satisfaction. Studies in this area have focused on narrow groups including samples of German journalists, Colorado journalists, and newspaper women.

One of the larger studies, The American Journalist, examined job satisfaction and other factors affecting U.S. journalists working at daily and weekly newspapers. The authors found job autonomy, feedback from supervisors, and the perception of how well the organization is informing the public among the strongest predictors of work satisfaction.[18]

In 1977, a study of Bavarian journalists including editors and managing editors, found that more than one-half of those interviewed felt under time pressure at least occasionally.[19]

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[15] David Rosenthal, Michael Teague, Paul Retish, Jude Wes, and Randall Vessell, "The Relationship Between Work Environment Attribute and Burnout." Journal of Leisure Research, 15:125-135 (second quarter 1983).

[16] Savicki and Cooley, p. 251.

[17] Ayala Pines and Christina Maslach, "Characteristics of Staff Burnout in Mental Health Settings," Hospital and Community Psychiatry, 29:233-237 (1976).

[18] David H. Weaver and G. Cleveland Wilhoit, The American Journalist, 2nd edition, (Indiana University Press, 1991), p. 99.

Barrett found the opportunity to advance, self-direction and independence, and personal interest and fulfillment were crucial in overall job satisfaction of American newspaper women.[20]

In 1978, Shaver found satisfaction to be the result of the presence of positive motivators (factors such as achievement, recognition, possibility of growth).[21]

"Bureaucratization of newswork" was found to be one of the principle sources of job dissatisfaction among journalists in a 1976 study by Johnstone. Increasing centralization and job dissatisfaction was due to decreased autonomy.[22]

A questionnaire designed to measure job satisfaction in the newsroom was developed in 1958 by Dr. Chilton R. Bush. This test was designed to assist newspaper management in making the work environment more satisfying.[23]

Scholarly research on job stress as it affects journalists is scarce. A few survey-type studies have looked at journalists' perceived attitudes toward stress. Editors and Stress, a 1983 report done by the Associated Press Managing Editors, found 66 percent of these editors reported they believed it would be moderately or highly stressful to be a reporter at their newspaper.[24]

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[19] Heinz-Dietrich Fischer, "State of Health and Stress Factors in Occupation: The Mass Media Profession," Social Science Medicine, 21:1367-1371 (1985).

[20] Grace H. Barrett, "Job Satisfaction Among Newspaperwomen," Journalism Quarterly, 16:593-599 (Autumn 1984).

[21] Harold C. Shaver, "Job Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction Among Journalism Graduates," Journalism Quarterly, 55:54-61 (Spring 1978).

[22] John W.C. Johnstone, "Organizational Constraints of Newswork," Journalism Quarterly, 53:5-13 (Spring 1976).

[23] Merrill Samuelson, "A Standardized Test to Measure Job Satisfaction in the Newsroom," Journalism Quarterly, 39:285-291 (Summer 1962).

[24] Robert H. Giles, ed., Editors and Stress, (New York: Associated Press Managing Editors Association, 1983) p. 108.

The author of"The Newsroom Barometer: Job Satisfaction and the Impact of Racial Diversity at U.S. Daily Newspapers" states that respondents cited as reasons they may leave the newspaper business "STRESSSSS!" and "Burnout."[25]

A 1991 study looked at job burnout in a sample of reporters and copy editors from five dailies. Cook and Banks found job burnout levels to be highest in young, entry-level journalists working as copy editors at small dailies. However, other variables also were found to significantly relate to job burnout, including age, job title, total years of experience, income and self-reported job satisfaction.[26]

## Method

### Sample

In the current study, the subjects were a total of 120 reporters and copy editors from ten dailies of dissimilar size and publication schedules. Only full-time employees handling news copy were surveyed including beat and general assignment reporters and copy editors with both editing and layout and design duties. Surveys and tests were sent in November and December of 1991.

This was not a study of attitudes of reporters or copy editors at a particular newspaper. Rather, the results look at the occupations of reporters and copy editors from all papers represented. Reporters and copy editors from the following newspapers with circulations noted participated in this study: Arizona Republic-322,534; The Cincinnati Enquirer-196,290; Dallas Morning News-371,537; Fort Myers (Fla.) News-Press-83,694; Lexington (Ky.) Herald Leader-122,673; Monroe (N.C.) Enquirer Journal-13,128; Palm Beach Post-169,360; (Rockford, Ill.) Register Star-73,703; Tucson Citizen-51,377; and

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[25] Ted Pease and J. Frazier Smith, "The Newsroom Barometer: Job Satisfaction and the Impact of Racial Diversity at U.S. Daily Newspapers", (Athens: Ohio: E. W. Scripps School of Journalism, 1991) p. 16.

[26] Betsy B. Cook and Steven R. Banks, "Predictors of Job Burnout in Reporters and Copyeditors," to be published in *Journalism Quarterly*, Winter 1992.

The Washington Times-772,749.[27]

## Instruments

The survey instrument was divided into three sections, a demographic survey and two psychological tests. The first section requested demographic and career information including age, gender, title, income level, educational background and years of experience. Career information items included the following statement: *Do you plan to leave journalism within the next five years?* The subject was asked to indicate yes or no.

Other career items were obtained by a simple summative score on each of the following items, ranked from 1 to 5 on a Likert type scale: *I am satisfied with my present work; I am working in the kind of job I wanted when I was a student; The world of work is different from what I expected; If I had it to do over, I would still choose a career in journalism.*

One psychological test was the Maslach Burnout Inventory. Scoring procedure for the MBI in this study was the frequency system.[28] The MBI is divided into three separate subscales: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. Internal consistency reliability measures were reported by Maslach and Jackson as .90 for emotional exhaustion, .79 for depersonalization, and .71 for personal accomplishment. The highest level criterion related validity reported in the test manual was .68.[29] Scores at the upper end of the scale on (EE) emotional exhaustion and (DP) depersonalization indicate high levels of job burnout. Scores at the lower end of the scale on (PA) personal accomplishment indicate high levels of job burnout.

The second test, the Work Environment Scale (WES) developed by Moos at Stanford University measured 10 dimensions of an environmental characteristic called social climate. This 90-item, true-false questionnaire has 10 nine-item scales that measure how people see the setting they are in, how they relate to each other, how the environment may channel each person's growth and how structured the environment is.[30]

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[27] *1990 Editor and Publisher Yearbook.*

[28] Maslach and Jackson, 1986.

[29] Maslach and Jackson, 1986.

Moos defines the scales on the WES as follows.

1. **Involvement** - The extent to which workers are concerned about and committed to their jobs.
2. **Peer Cohesion**- The extent to which employees are friendly and supportive of one another.
3. **Supervisors Support** - The extent to which management is supportive of employees and encourages employees to be supportive of one another.
4. **Autonomy** - The extent to which employees are encouraged to be self-sufficient and to make their own decisions
5. **Task Orientation** - The degree of emphasis on good planning, efficiency, and getting the job done.
6. **Work Pressure** - The degree to which the press of work and time urgency dominate the job milieu.
7. **Clarity** - The extent to which employees know what to expect in their daily routine and how explicitly rules and policies are communicated.
8. **Control** - The extent to which management uses rules and pressures to keep employees under control.
9. **Innovation** - The degree of emphasis on variety, change and new approaches.
10. **Physical Comfort** - The extent to which the physical surroundings contribute to a pleasant work environment.

The WES was standardized on a sample of more than 3,000 workers. The internal consistency reliability measures (Cronbach's alpha) ranged from .69 to .86 for the 10 scales, and the test-retest data (1 month correlations) ranged from .69 to .83.[31] Moos does not report validity.

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[30] Moos, 1987.

[31] Rudolph H. Moos, Work Environment Scale Manual, (Palo Alto, Ca.: Consulting Psychologists Press, 1981), p. 5.

### Data Analysis

Pearson r correlations and analysis of variance were used for data analysis in this study. The SAS statistical program was used to perform the data analyses.[32]

## Results

A variety of variables were found to significantly relate to job burnout in journalists. In addition, a number of significant differences were found between reporters and copy editors.

Table one presents the results of a Pearson r correlation analysis for all of the independent variables by the three dependent variables that comprise the Maslach Burnout Inventory. Table two presents the results of a series of separate analyses of variance models which examine the differences between reporters and copy editors.

Age was found to have a significant inverse relationship with emotional exhaustion. Older subjects demonstrated significantly lower levels of emotional exhaustion. In previous studies in other professions, age has been found to have this type of relationship with job burnout measures. Cook and Banks found in a 1991 study of reporters and copy editors that age and emotional exhaustion had a significant inverse relationship.[33]

There was a significant inverse relationship between the circulation size of the newspaper and personal accomplishment. Subjects at larger circulation newspapers had significantly lower levels of personal accomplishment.

Copy editors were found to have significantly higher levels of emotional exhaustion than were reporters. Copy editors also were found to have significantly higher levels of depersonalization than were reporters. Both of these findings replicate the 1991 Cook and Banks study of reporters and copy editors.

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[32] SAS/STAT User's Guide, (Cary, NC: SAS Institute Inc, 1988).

[33] Cook and Banks, 1991.

Subjects who indicated they were highly satisfied with their jobs had significantly lower scores on emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. Subjects who indicated higher levels of job satisfaction had higher levels of personal accomplishment.

Subjects who indicated they would still choose a career in journalism if they had to do it all over again had significantly lower scores on emotional exhaustion and significantly higher scores on personal accomplishment These findings replicate the Cook and Banks study of reporters and copy editors.

Involvement was found to be significantly correlated with emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and personal accomplishment. Involvement, as measured by the WES, is an indication of the extent to which employees are concerned about and committed to their jobs. Copy editors and reporters with higher levels of involvement had significantly lower levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. This finding is consistent with Savicki and Cooley in their 1987 study of burnout in mental health professionals. They found low levels of involvement resulted in significantly higher levels of emotional exhaustion. In addition, Rosenthal (1983) found involvement was found to be moderately correlated with burnout in a study of parks and recreation professionals.[34]

In this current study, subjects with higher levels of involvement also showed higher levels of personal accomplishment on the Maslach Burnout Inventory.

As with involvement, all three subscales on the Maslach Burnout Inventory were significantly correlated with peer cohesion. Peer cohesion is the extent to which employees are friendly and supportive of one another. Subjects with higher levels of peer cohesion on the WES had significantly lower levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization and higher levels of personal accomplishment on the MBI. This finding is consistent with Savicki and Cooley who found personal accomplishment on the MBI to be most closely related to peer cohesion on the WES. They hypothesize that co-workers may function as a reference group against which workers judge their competence or as an ongoing supervision and consulting resource to celebrate accomplishments and to render advice and solutions.

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[34] Rosenthal, 1983.

Supervisor support, or the extent to which management is supportive of employees and encourage employees to be supportive of one another, was found to be significantly correlated with personal accomplishment on the burnout inventory. Subjects with higher levels of supervisor support had higher levels of personal accomplishment. Billings and Moos (1981) report similar findings.[35]

All three subscales on the Maslach Burnout Inventory were significantly correlated with autonomy. Autonomy is the extent to which employees are encouraged to be self-sufficient and to make their own decisions. Subjects with higher levels of autonomy had significantly lower levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization and higher levels of personal accomplishment. This finding also is reported by Billings and Moos (1982) who state those employees who had more perceived stress had less autonomy. Savicki and Cooley (1987) also replicate this finding when they reported that low autonomy resulted in significantly higher emotional exhaustion scores.

All three subscales on the Maslach Burnout Inventory were significantly correlated with task orientation -- the degree of emphasis on good planning, efficiency and getting the job done. Subjects with higher levels of task orientation had significantly lower levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization and higher levels of personal accomplishment. Savicki and Cooley found low task orientation causes significantly higher depersonalization in their 1987 study of mental health workers.

Work pressure, or the degree to which the press of work and time urgency dominate the job milieu, was found to be significantly correlated with emotional exhaustion. Higher levels of work pressure resulted in significantly higher levels of emotional exhaustion. This finding is consistent with Savicki and Cooley (1987) and Rosenthal (1983). Both studies found higher levels of work pressure were strongly related to significantly higher levels of emotional exhaustion.

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[35] Andrew G. Billings and Rudolph H. Moos, "Work stress and stress-buffering roles of work and family resources," Journal of Occupational Behaviour, 3:215-232 (1982).

Higher levels of clarity were found to be significantly related to higher levels personal accomplishment. Clarity is the extent to which employees know what to expect in their daily routine and how explicitly rules and policies are communicated. Rosenthal (1983) also found that personal accomplishment was linked to clarity.

The subscales of control and innovation as measured by the WES were not found to significantly relate to any of the burnout variables.

Physical comfort was found to significantly relate to emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. Physical comfort as measured by WES is the extent to which the physical surroundings contribute to a pleasant work environment. Subjects with higher levels of physical comfort had lower levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization.

Separate analysis of variance models were completed on reporters and copy editors. These ANOVAS examined differences between the two categories on career items, the burnout items, and the WES scores. Scores are represented in Table two.

Significant differences between reporters and copy editors were found on the statement "I am satisfied with my work." Reporters were significantly more satisfied.

In addition, significant differences were found on the statement "I am working in the kind of job I wanted when I was a student." Reporters were significantly more likely to indicate they agreed with this statement.

Reporters were also significantly more likely to agree with this statement "If I had to do it over, I would still choose a career in journalism."

Copy editors were significantly more likely than reporters to have higher levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization as measured by the Maslach Burnout Inventory.

In addition, copy editors had significantly lower scores than reporters on the following WES measures: Involvement; Autonomy; Innovation, and Physical Comfort. Copy editors had significantly higher scores than reporters on Control.

There were no other significant differences found between reporters and copy editors.

## Discussion

It is important to note the complex relationships among job burnout indices and work environment. Caution must be followed in assessing just what these relationships mean. However, some results of this study seem to clearly point to areas of the work environment in which newspaper supervisors may take steps to lessen job burnout.

Also, copy editors responding say they are less satisfied with their work situation than reporters. This comes at a time when "information processing" (copy editing and design duties) is becoming more important than ever. Changing technologies are placing more responsibilities on many copy editors and newspaper managers searching for ways of survival are proposing they become true community data bases for information processing.

The results seem to indicate that higher levels of job burnout among reporters and copy editors are the result of lower levels of involvement, peer cohesion, supervisor support, autonomy, task orientation, clarity and physical comfort and higher levels of work pressure.

Clearly the task for supervisors is to be more supportive of reporters and copy editors and to find creative ways to involve them in on-the-job decisions. Strengthening peer relationships, autonomy and involvement are specific areas that could help reporters and copy editors feel more personal accomplishment and less emotional exhaustion and depersonalization.

Other steps to lessening burnout are assuring efficiency and good planning, explicitly defining rules and policies, and providing a pleasant and comfortable work environment.

Older reporters and copy editors demonstrated significantly lower levels of emotional exhaustion. Perhaps older employees have found coping mechanisms to deal with job-related stress, becoming survivors when the younger employees feel more burnout and perhaps many already have left the field. This also should be considered an area of concern when fewer students in schools of journalism are majoring in news-editorial and the pool of job applicants in future years may be smaller and of less quality in a time when greater skills will be required.

It also is interesting to note that respondents at larger circulation newspapers had significantly lower levels of personal accomplishment than fellow workers on papers with smaller staffs.

The findings relating to copy editors and how they view their jobs and level of satisfaction would seem to be of particular concern. Editors from around the nation have frequently told the authors of the need for copy editors. In fact, a number of editors have said they have editing positions open when many resumes for reporting jobs are stacked on their desks. Also, editors who interview at a number of journalism schools have indicated to the authors that they find much less emphasis on careers in copy editing than on reporting when they do job interviews on campuses.

In this study copy editors were found to have significantly higher levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization than reporters. Copy editors also had significantly lower scores than reporters on WES measures of involvement, autonomy, innovation and physical comfort. However, copy editors had higher control scores, indicating they perceive management uses more rules and pressures to keep them under control.

Reporters were more likely to be satisfied with their work than copy editors and more likely to agree with the statement "I am working in the kind of job I wanted when I was a student." Reporters also were more likely than copy editors to choose a journalism career if they had it all to do over.

The implications would seem to be that while all is not well as far as burnout conditions for reporters, keeping copy editors is even more of a significant concern. The role of the traditional newspaper copy editor has been changing in recent years with greater emphasis on page design and new technology such as pagination systems.

In some situations, the traditional newspaper copy desk job functions of editing, headline writing and page design have been separated at newspapers which now have design desks. This may or may not be a positive. Do copy desk workers feel as they now merely are pawns of the designers, loosing much of the creative aspect and decision making?

On the other hand, if the responsibilities are not separated, then the copy desk now has additional responsibilities added to what in most cases already is a pressure-packed, heavy work load. These desk workers no longer just have to rough out layouts on layout sheets. With pagination systems they also have to perform such additional functions as exact type alignment formerly carried out by the composing room staff.

Researchers using the WES in other professions have provided feedback and promoted improvements for the work environment in those fields. A series of studies have shown that close analysis of the relationship between work environment and job burnout can lead to reduction of stress and increased employee satisfaction. Newspaper managers should be open to applying such information to help make work environments more satisfactory for reporters and copy editors.

The findings of this study seem to point to the need for further research in the area of work environment and burnout, particularly in copy editing. Future studies should include detailed investigations of pay scales, working hours, opportunities for advancement, and the specific tasks and changing duties of copy editors. Also, future studies should look at editors' attitudes toward recognition of copy editors' professional contributions.

**Table 1**
**Pearson r Correlations**
**Independent variables and dependent variables**

| | EE | DP | PA |
|---|---|---|---|
| Age * r=<br>p= | -.226<br>.017 | -.149<br>.128 | .001<br>.990 |
| Size of paper | .058<br>.546 | .102<br>.297 | -.253<br>.012 |
| Title | .297<br>.002 | .238<br>.014 | -.040<br>.695 |
| Self-reported satisfaction | .382<br>.001 | .304<br>.001 | -.230<br>.021 |
| Still choose career in jrn. | .261<br>.006 | .155<br>.109 | -.240<br>.015 |
| Involvement | -.339<br>.001 | -.308<br>.002 | .414<br>.001 |
| Peer Cohesion | -.308<br>.002 | -.220<br>.030 | .240<br>.021 |
| Supervisor Support | -.155<br>.119 | -.177<br>.081 | .214<br>.040 |
| Autonomy | -.296<br>.002 | -.209<br>.038 | .258<br>.013 |
| Task Orientation | -.337<br>.001 | -.396<br>.001 | .334<br>.001 |
| Work Pressure | .217<br>.028 | .064<br>.528 | .005<br>.962 |
| Clarity | -.163<br>.101 | -.143<br>.160 | .205<br>.049 |
| Control | .164<br>.099 | .039<br>.698 | -.017<br>.874 |
| Innovation | -.151<br>.130 | -.083<br>.147 | .141<br>.179 |
| Physical Comfort | -.398<br>.001 | -.313<br>.002 | .106<br>.312 |

*Note: First number in each box represents correlation value; second number is probability value.

### Table 2
### Analysis of variance
### Reporters versus Copy editors

| | F | p |
|---|---|---|
| Self-reported satisfaction | 4.52 | .035 |
| Working in kind of job I wanted | 12.71 | .001 |
| Still choose career in jrn. | 6.28 | .014 |
| Emotional Exhaustion | 10.49 | .002 |
| Depersonalization | 6.27 | .014 |
| Personal Accomplishment | .15 | .695 |
| Involvement | 4.12 | .045 |
| Peer Cohesion | 1.67 | .199 |
| Supervisor Support | 1.69 | .197 |
| Autonomy | 16.66 | .001 |
| Task Orientation | .70 | .403 |
| Work Pressure | .33 | .564 |
| Clarity | .09 | .771 |
| Control | 11.73 | .001 |
| Innovation | 6.49 | .012 |
| Physical Comfort | 25.49 | .001 |

# Do Managers Forecast the Newspaper Industry's Economy?

by

Virginia Roark and Gerald Stone
Southern Illinois University at Carbondale

Paper presented to the Media Management and Economics Division, Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication Annual Convention, August 1992, Montreal, Canada.

# Do Managers Forecast the Newspaper Industry's Economy?

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## Abstract

Because newspaper budget managers are very close to the economic events affecting the newspaper industry, decisions they make might predict the short-term economic future.

The number of ads in the editorial help-wanted section of the weekly trade publication Editor and Publisher was correlated with the Gross National Product quarter across 30 years. The highest correlation was found between the E&P ads and the GNP quarter corresponding to six months before the ads appeared. indicating that newspaper managers react to economic trends rather than forecasting trends.

A multiple regression model using newspaper advertising expenditures, the GNP and unemployment to predict the editorial classified ads in E&P was significant. However, when total newspaper advertising expenditures was broken into national, retail and classified expenditures, only retail expenditures correlated significantly with the E&P ads.

The study also reports findings about trends in newspaper national and classified advertising.

# Do Managers Forecast the Newspaper Industry's Economy?

by

Virginia Roark and Gerald Stone

All businesses look for trends that might help them predict their economic future, and the newspaper industry is no exception.

The bulk of newspaper revenues comes from two main sources: circulation and advertising. Circulation trends are easy to spot, and they do not fluctuate with the economy. Put simply, America has a declining percent of readers, and the prognosis for reversing this trend is bleak.

A poll by the Times Mirror Center for People and the Press reported that the percentage of adults under age 35 who said they had read a newspaper the previous day dropped from 67 percent in 1965 to 29 percent in 1990. In 1988 only 16 percent of teenagers surveyed by Simmons Market Research Bureau reported reading a newspaper every weekday (Cobb-Walgren 1990).

Young adults' shrinking interest in newspapers, and their ambivalence for news in general, bodes ill for future circulation levels. Although some believe that these teens will pick up the newspaper habit later in life (Udell, 1990), other researchers are less optimistic (Lain, 1986).

Advertising, the other main source of newspaper industry revenue, presents a more encouraging predictor of economic trends because advertising fluctuates with the general economy. Newspaper managers might try to forecast business trends by assessing the health of businesses in the local community or the nation's economy.

What the individual managers see is likely to influence their business decisions. A composite of all these individual decisions from newspaper managers might be a useful predictor of how the newspaper industry will fare.

Forecasting when the economy will turn around is difficult, according to analysts, because one of the major factors is intangible. Consumer optimism translates into consumer spending, and a change of attitude is hard to forecast (Potter, 1992, and Holtzman, 1992). It would be useful to find a measure that is related more closely to the industry.

## E&P Ads as Cues

In considering possible trend data that might qualify as a forecaster of economic prosperity or disaster for the newspaper industry, a viable bellwether candidate was the number of classified ads in the industry's weekly trade publication Editor and Publisher. Specifically, the "Help Wanted, Editorial" section of E&P's classifieds seemed to offer some potential as a predictor, because:

1) Those who are closest to the micro- and macro-economic events that affect the newspaper industry are newspaper budget managers themselves.

2) Newspaper managers will use their available budget information to make hiring decisions.

3) Hiring decisions aimed at news-editorial staffers may be among the most sensitive to economic trends.

4) If advertising linage is dipping at any given paper, decisions to replace or add editorial staff may be delayed or canceled. If this is indicative of an economic slide for the industry in general, fewer news-editorial staffers will be hired and the help-wanteds in Editor and Publisher's weekly classified advertising columns will shrink.

It is possible that E&P classifieds may follow gross economic trends rather than precede them. Decisions not to advertise for staff positions may be made long after an industry slump has been in progress rather than just before one is about to occur. If that is the case, it is as testable as the preceding hypothesis.

Udell (1990) used newsprint consumption to chart the newspaper economy. He stated that newsprint consumption has grown 2 percent for every 3 percent of the Gross National Product. Using a simple regression model with GNP as the independent variable to predict the dependent variable newsprint consumption, Udell found that 98.9 percent of the annual variations in U.S. newsprint consumption are explained by the Real Gross National Product.

But newsprint consumption is really a part of the Gross National Product, and should be expected to mirror it closely. It would be useful to use a measure of economic change that is more truly inside the industry.

Newspapers' response to recession is to raise ad linage rates, a practice that allows them to keep up with inflation plus make a profit. But the current economic recession left little room left for profit. Retailers cut their ad linage much more severely than they had in other recessions, 10 to 15 percent instead of the usual 5 percent (Holtzman, 1991a).

## Media Ad Competition

Newspapers began losing advertising dollars to radio and magazines before the advent of television. In 1938, newspapers claimed 40.5 percent of the advertising dollars while radio gathered 8.7 percent and magazines 8.2 percent. Radio and magazine gained in percentage and newspapers declined in percentage until 1946, with radio topping out at 14.9 percent and at 12.1 percent. During World War II, newspapers' advertising share rose slightly, from 32.4 percent in 1945 to 36.7 percent in 1949 (Newspaper Advertising Bureau, 1991).

In 1949 television entered the competition for advertising dollars, and newspaper advertising share has been on the decline ever since. Television claimed 22.1 percent of advertising in 1990, while newspapers' share was 25.1 percent. In the ever-changing media market, however, television now may be losing ground, too. As cable television, home satellite reception and video rentals have fragmented the television audience, that medium's advertising share appears to have topped out (Newspaper Advertising Bureau, 1991).

Newspapers have another competitor. Direct mail has gained in advertising share percentage every year since 1979 (Newspaper Advertising Bureau, 1991). It has been helped not only by media competition for ad dollars, but also by trouble in the retail business itself. Big store chains have experienced competition from specialty stores and discounters, responding with consolidations, mergers or by bankruptcy. All of these options have meant store closings and fewer advertising dollars for newspapers (Holtzman, 1991a and 1991b).

Current recession woes affected all media in the 1990s. Total media advertising spending fell by 1.5 percent, the first drop since 1961.

Newspaper advertising fell 5 percent in 1991, the largest drop since 1942 (Potter, 1992). Many analysts are worried that any improvement in the general economy may not come before 1993 (Potter, 1992).

Still, relative to other businesses, the newspaper business looks fairly healthy. Kenneth Berents of the Alex. Brown & Sons Inc. securities firm estimated that the newspaper industry averaged a profit margin of 16 percent in 1991 (Potter, 1992). The Times Mirror Reported a 9.4 return on equity for 1990; Gannett, 18.3; Knight-Ridder, 16.7; the New York Times, 6.1; and the Washington Post, 19.3 (Rothmyer, 1991). It was not clear if this meant all newspaper business revenue, regardless of whether it came from newspapers or other newspaper-owned businesses.

But Berents' estimate is down 10 points from profits in the 1980s (Potter, 1992). If the figure included all other newspaper-owned businesses, then it could be masking a more serious problem with newspapers themselves. All of the above companies reported their net income down from 1989, the Times Mirror by 39 percent, Gannett by 5 percent, Knight-Ridder by 40 percent, the New York Times by 76 percent, and the Washington Post by 12 percent (Rothmyer, 1991).

## Methodology

A sample of classified advertisements for editorial positions appearing in Editor and Publisher was taken twice a year from the years 1960 to 1990, totaling 62 observations. Initially, one E&P edition was to be randomly selected from the first 26 weeks and one from the second 26 weeks of the year. These two weeks were to constitute the same sampling issue for each of the 31 years. However, several possible seasonal hiring periods were excluded: January and December, because of the holidays, and May through July, because of possible summer replacement personnel ads. The remaining weeks were numbered separately for the spring and fall period, and one week was randomly selected to represent each of the two periods.

Intercoder reliability among 10 coders was only .65, a somewhat low correlation for what was essentially a counting exercise. But since there were up to 80 small ads on a page, poorly delineated between sections, mechanical accuracy turned out to be a problem. A research assistant (who was not told the intent of the investigation) reviewed and recounted the ads and found that in nearly every case of disagreement, mechanical accuracy had been the problem rather than a difference in judgment. In most cases of previous coder disagreement, differences in the count did not vary by more than one.

Two research questions were asked:

1) Are editors anticipating, or predicting, the future of the newspaper economy by their hiring decisions as reflected through the Editor and Publisher classified ads? More specifically, does the number of news-editorial ads appearing in the E&P serve as an early warning indicator for the newspaper industry's future economic health?

2) Conversely, if editorial decisions about hiring as reflected in the number of E&P ads follow, rather than lead, the general economic state of the industry, what are the best predictors of editorial hiring?

For the first research question, the E&P ads were correlated with the Gross National Product, which is reported quarterly. GNP was collected from International Financial Statistics, a publication generally available in academic libraries. The second quarter, which represents

April through July, and the fourth quarter, tabulating October through December, were correlated with the E&P ad sample corresponding with the same time period.

Both the number of classified ads and the Gross National Product have an upward trend. A Pearson product moment correlation between them will reflect the correlation because both increase, in addition to any true correlation. To remove the correlation that was due to this shared upward trend, both variables were converted to natural logarithms.

A second contributor to an upward trend in the variables is inflation. To take out the effect of inflation, the GNP figures were all made equivalent to 1982 dollars by using price deflators (for example, 1982 dollars are 30.9 percent of 1960 dollars, and 130.1 percent of 1990 dollars). A price deflator table is published in the Economic Report of the President.

The change from one year to the next in the logged variables was computed by subtraction, and this difference for the two variables was correlated. By lagging the appropriate variable, a correlation was obtained between the E&P ads and the GNP six months before and after the classified appeared.

For the second research question, three variables were chosen as indicators of then newspaper economy. They were placed in a multiple regression model for predicting Editor and Publisher classified ads:

1) Total advertising expenditures for the year (including retail, classified, and national expenditures. These are compiled yearly by the Newspaper Advertising Bureau.

2) The Gross National Product, collected as described above, but this time as yearly data, to be comparable to the total advertising expenditures.

3) The national unemployment rate, which is considered by Business Conditions Digest to be an economic indicator. The data were collected from the Statistical Abstract of the United States (1991).

The two Editor and Publisher samples for each year were combined for comparison with the yearly data.

Both the advertising expenditures and the GNP were converted to 1982 dollars to control for inflation.

To measure a change in the figures that did not simply reflect the upward trend of the GNP and Editor and Publisher classified ads, the differences between the yearly figures were computed, and these differences were converted to natural logarithms, which smoothed the upward trend. The unemployment figure, a percentage of the population, does not climb steadily, and so it was left unaltered.

## Results

Research Question 1: Do E&P ads predict a change in the economy?

The classifieds in E&P did not predict the economy. The Editor and Publisher ads correlated most with the GNP figure six months before a particular ad appeared (See Table 1). The correlation was not extremely high, at .249, but it approached statistical significance with alpha set at .05 (p=.055). The correlation between the Editor and Publisher ads and the corresponding GNP time frame was .090 (p=.487), and the correlation between the ads and the GNP figure that followed was .132 (p=.316). The correlation with the GNP 12 months later was -.137 (p=.327).

It would appear, then, that editors and publishers make hiring decisions in response to changes they see in the economy. The fact that the highest correlation was with the GNP time frame before the one during which the ads were published indicates that the E&P ad figure is not simply a reflection of what is going on in the general economy (i.e., a part of the GNP is not being correlated with the total GNP). Those in the position of hiring newspaper personnel are responding "after the fact" to the economy.

Research Question 2: Do newspaper advertising expenditures, the Gross National Product, and the unemployment rate predict the number of classified ads in Editor and Publisher?

Since it appears that the classified ads in E&P follow the economic trend, the E&P ads are best viewed as a dependent variable. The three test variables were used as independent variables in a multiple regression model to predict the dependent variable, E&P classified ads.

The model was significant at an alpha level of .05 (F=2.98, p=.0497). It accounted for .256 of the variance in the dependent variable, Editor and Publisher ads. Clearly, there is room for more variables to be added to explain the variance, but these variables were significantly important.

By far the most important predictor was the total advertising expenditure figure; without that variable the R-square was reduced to .1593. However, with alpha set at .05, the contribution of advertising expenditures over and above the contribution of the other variables in combination failed to reach significance (p=.078; see Table 2). Elimination of the Gross National Product from the model reduced the R-square by .0303; the removal of unemployment reduced the R-square by .0149.

Total advertising expenditures were used in this model rather than their three component parts: national, retail and classified advertising expenditures. Using the three figures independently actually resulted in a lower R-square while lowering statistical significance because of the added degrees of freedom. Finding that the sum of the parts was less than the whole was puzzling, so each of the parts was correlated separately with the E&P ads.

The only correlation that was significant (.366) was the one between the E&P ads and retail advertising expenditures (p=.047). The correlation for national advertising expenditures was .220 (p=.242), and for classified it was -.066 (p=.728). Thus, it appears that the correlation between newspaper advertising expenditures and the Editor and Publisher ads was due almost entirely to the correlation between the E&P ads and retail advertising expenditures.

## Discussion

The first question, "Do newspaper editors and publishers anticipate the short-term economy in their hiring practices?" appears to be answered no. The best predictor of Editor and Publisher classified ads was the GNP six months before the ads had appeared.

One possible explanation for the finding may be that it takes a while for the local economy, of which the newspaper is a part, to reflect the effects of the larger economic picture. The effects of souring economic signs on a macro level may take a few months to show themselves, and perhaps another few months for these effects to be reflected in the local purchase of newspaper advertising.

A second explanation may be that newspaper managers have not planned much for the future because they never had to before. "Perhaps because the business has been so lucrative for so long, the painful decline in advertising caught many in the industry unprepared, prompting a wave of anxiety about the future," opined Jones (1991).

A third reason for editors' and publishers' lack of anticipation of economic changes may be that the newspaper industry's problems are only partly due to a sluggish economy. Newspapers traditionally rode out such economic slumps by raising ad prices. But the competition of new media for advertising dollars and the decline in newspaper readership means that the problem is more than cyclical economics. Future planning for newspapers will mean looking beyond short-term economics, which newspapers usually have weathered without undue difficulty. Newspapers will be looking at the electronics-dominated, micromarketing 21st century and seeking their place in it (Gersh, 1989).

The second question, concerning the best predictors of Editor and Publisher ads, was partially answered by using the model of advertising expenditures, GNP and unemployment. The model was statistically significant at .05 alpha, but the .256 correlation indicates that other measures of newspaper economics could be added to refine the model. Care must be take, however, that what is added to the model is not correlation due simply to an upward trend.

Total advertising expenditures was by far the best predictor, suggesting that editors look mainly to the state of their advertising revenue when making hiring decisions. This would concur with conclusions drawn from the first research question.

Retail advertising was correlated significantly with the Editor and Publisher ads, while national and classified advertising were not. Retail advertising is the largest portion of the total advertising expenditures, and has fluctuated the least in its relative contribution to the total. It would be reasonable that newspaper managers would make expansion decisions based on this figure.

National advertising does not correlate well with the Editor and Publisher ads because national advertising's percentage of the total newspaper advertising expenditures has been declining steadily. In 1950 it was 25 percent of the total newspaper advertising expenditures; in 1960 it was down to 21.1 percent; in 1990 it was 12.8 percent of the total (See Table 3). This seems to illustrate graphically the advertising lost to other media.

Classified advertising picked up the slack left by the retreating national advertising. It accounted for 18.2 percent of the total advertising budget in 1950, and 35.6 percent in 1990. Retail advertising remained fairly constant. It was 56.8 percent of the total newspaper budget in 1950, had increased to 58.1 percent of the budget in 1980, and then dropped to 51.6 percent in 1990. The recent decrease may reflect retail store budget woes (Holtzman, 1991b).

Classified advertising normally swings lowest and fastest during a recession (Holtzman, 1991b). There is a sharp decline of real estate, automotive, and help-wanted ads, but then usually a quicker recovery than with the other types of advertising. (This is probably why it did not correlate well with the Editor and Publisher ads: Newspapers respond to changes in the economy at a slower pace.) But a quick recovery in classifieds has not occurred in the current recession. Although the recession has been said to be over, the economy is recovering at a very slow pace.

Another factor has hurt classified advertising. It faces increasing competition from shoppers, especially those specializing in real estate or automotive ads. Shoppers appear to be less hurt by the recession than paid subscription newspapers, although they have not gone unscathed (Fitzgerald, 1991). When the recession ends, this competition will still be present, and newspapers will be less able to make classified advertising fill the gap between retail advertising and the shrinking national market.

Retail advertising is also in danger today. Retailers have had to face their own competition in recent years, with the same kind of specialization of markets affecting them that has affected traditional mass media. Department stores are losing business to specialty shops and home shopping services. That means there will be fewer and more budget-constrained retail advertisers for newspapers, and these advertisers may restructure their advertising strategy to the detriment of newspapers. Advertising through catalogs and direct mail is replacing some newspaper advertising. While newspaper advertising dollar share dropped in the last decade, direct mail's share rose (Newspaper Advertising Bureau, 1990).

## Conclusion

This study found that the best measure of how a local newspaper will fare in the near future may be its own local economy.

Retail advertising dollars were the best single indicator found in the model used for predicting the national newspaper economy. However, the industry is advised to consider using multiple measures to complement local retail advertising trends because the accuracy of this predictor may be questionable: Retail spending depends on consumer optimism, an intangible variable.

Other intangible variables are also indicators of change in the newspaper business, according to Frank Bennack Jr., president and chief executive officer of the Hearst Corporation (Gersh, 1989a). The changing role of women, the aging of the population, growing illiteracy, and technological changes all affect newspaper readership and newspaper economics.

Richard L. Vaughn, executive vice president and corporate director of research and planning at Foote, Cone & Belding Communications Inc., believes that some of the newspaper industry's woes may be due to the unsteady and confusing transition to a new era of electronic media. Vaughn believes that newspapers will have an important role to play in this new media world, but it will be a different role (Gersh, 1989b). According to Hearst's Bennack, research is the key to understanding the significance of these changes and being prepared for the future.

## Table 1:

## GNP Quarters and their Correlation to E&P Ads

| GNP QUARTER | PEARSON R CORRELATION | P |
|---|---|---|
| 12 months after<br>(Oct.-Dec. or Apr.-June) | -.130 | .327 |
| 6 months before<br>(Oct.-Dec. or Apr.-June) | .249 | .055 |
| Simultaneous<br>(Oct.-Dec. or Apr.-June) | .091 | .487 |
| 6 months after<br>(Oct.-Dec. or Apr.-June) | .132 | .315 |

## Table 2:

## Summary of Regression Analysis Using Three Variable Sets

| MODEL | VARIABLE ELIMINATED | R-SQUARE | REDUCTION IN R-SQUARE | F | P |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Full | none | .2559 | none | 2.98 | .049 |
| R1 | GNP | .2256 | .0303 | 1.06 | .367 |
| R2 | unemployment | .2410 | .0419 | .52 | .486 |
| R3 | total adv. expenditures | .1593 | .0966 | 3.38 | .078 |

## Table 3:

## Newspaper Advertising Expenditures (Millions of Dollars)

| YEAR | NATIONAL |  | RETAIL |  | CLASSIFIED |  |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  | $millions | % total | $millions | % total | $millions | % total |
| 1950 | $518 | 25.0 | $1,175 | 56.8 | $377 | 18.2 |
| 1960 | $778 | 21.1 | $2,100 | 57.0 | $803 | 21.8 |
| 1970 | $891 | 15.6 | $3,292 | 57.8 | $1,521 | 26.7 |
| 1980 | $1,963 | 13.2 | $8,609 | 58.1 | $4,222 | 28.5 |
| 1990 | $4,122 | 12.8 | $16,652 | 51.6 | $11,506 | 35.6 |

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# THE NEWS OMBUDSMAN,
# THE NEWS STAFF
# AND MEDIA ACCOUNTABILITY:
# THE CASE OF THE LOUISVILLE COURIER-JOURNAL

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# THE NEWS OMBUDSMAN, THE NEWS STAFF, AND MEDIA ACCOUNTABILITY: THE CASE OF THE LOUISVILLE COURIER-JOURNAL

## INTRODUCTION

When Norman Isaacs, the former executive editor of *The Courier-Journal* and *The Louisville Times,* appointed John Herchenroeder as the first news ombudsman in North America in 1967, his reasoning was clear.

"We had for years, (former Publisher) Barry (Bingham) Sr., I and others around in the executive ranks, thought we were too God-damned casual when it came to mistakes that occurred in the newspaper," Isaacs said. [1]

The feisty Isaacs was referring to an obligation that he felt the newspaper had to provide an account of its activities -- and its mistakes -- to the public. However, the idea that Isaacs help put in place more than 20 years ago had an unexpected effect that created a second kind of accountability: the obligation staff members had to render an account of their activities to the news ombudsman. This article explores this second kind of accountability through a study of the relationship between the news ombudsman and the staff members at *The Courier-Journal* in Louisville, Kentucky.

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[1] Telephone interview, November 26, 1990.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Media accountability has been defined as "the process by which news organizations or journalists are obliged to render an account of their activities to recognized constituencies such as audience members, news sources, advertisers, professional colleagues, or government regulatory bodies." [2]

Journalists have been aware of the need to provide some explanation for their activities from the initial efforts to publish newspapers in the United States 300 years ago. [3] In the ensuing years, such mechanisms as media criticism, the legal system, government regulation and self-regulation have been advanced as a means of making the media accountable. Media criticism, it has been argued, has proven more effective at generating publicity about the misdeeds of the news media than it has in effecting policy change. [4] The legal system has at least some ability to provide accountability through libel laws and judicial holdings protecting an individual's right of privacy. Yet the legal system has proved to be a costly and ineffective method for individuals seeking to protect and restore their reputations.[5] Direct government regulation of the print media has been blocked by First Amendment considerations.[6]

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[2] David Pritchard, "The Role of Press Councils in a System of Media Accountability: The Case of Quebec," *Canadian Journal of Communication*, 16: 73-93 (1991).

[3] See *Publick Occurrences Both Forreign and Domestick* from 1690, cited in Walter Lippmann, *Liberty and the News* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Howe, 1920), p. 4.

[4] See, for example, Ben H. Bagdikian, *The Effete Conspiracy and Other Crimes by the Press* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972); Ben H. Bagdikian, *The Media Monopoly* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1990).

The ineffectiveness of these external forms of media regulation has led to efforts by the media to regulate themselves. Such mechanisms as ethics codes, news councils and news ombudsmen have been advanced as methods that would subject the media to some degree of regulation without infringing on First Amendment freedoms. Yet each of these methods has been criticized on the grounds that they do a better job of serving public relations interests than providing accountability.

Ethics codes have existed in American newspapers since early in this century, but they have remained controversial because of arguments over whether the codes should carry sanctions.[7] Voluntary codes have been shown to exert little influence over the behavior of journalists.[8]

News councils have existed in Europe and overseas since the first one was created in Sweden in 1916, but they have failed to gain a solid foothold in the United States, where the National News Council died in 1984 after 11 years of struggle. Only the

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[5] See Randall P. Bezanson, Gilbert Cranberg and John Soloski, *Libel Law and the Press: Myth and Reality* (New York: The Free Press, 1987).

[6] See especially, *Miami Herald Publishing Co. v. Tornillo*, 418 U.S. 241 (1974).

[7] See Clifford G. Christians, "Self-Regulation: A Critical Role for Codes of Ethics," in Everette E. Dennis, Donald M. Gillmor, and Theodore L. Glasser, eds., *Media Freedom and Accountability* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, Inc., 1989), pp. 35-53.

[8] David Pritchard and Madelyn Peroni Morgan, "Impact of Ethics Codes on Judgments By Journalists: A Natural Experiment," *Journalism Quarterly,* 66: 934-941 (Winter 1989).

Minnesota News Council handles complaints on a state-wide basis. [9]

Interest in news ombudsmen in North America was spurred by A.H. Raskin, then an assistant editorial page editor of *The New York Times,* who wrote in a 1967 article that the quality of newspapers was poor and increasingly subject to pressures from corporate ownership. [10] He believed newspapers should establish a "Department of Internal Criticism" to give an account of their activities and get action for readers who made complaints. [11]

One of Raskin's readers was Isaacs, who appointed John Herchenroeder as the first news ombudsman in North America. [12] Since Herchenroeder's appointment in 1967, about 30 newspapers in the United States have created their own news ombudsmen. [13] Their roles vary from newspaper to newspaper. Some focus on providing accountability to individual complainants, while more than half of the news ombudsmen provide a form of public accountability by writing regular columns about their activities and the complaints they receive. [14]

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[9] Alfred Balk, "The Voluntary Model: Living With 'Public Watchdogs,'" in Everette E. Dennis, Donald M. Gillmor, and Theodore L. Glasser, eds., *Media Freedom and Accountability* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, Inc., 1989), pp. 61-75.

[10] A. H. Raskin, "What's Wrong With American Newspapers?" *The New York Times Magazine,* June 11, 1967.

[11] *Ibid.*

[12] "Ombudsman Named by C-J & Times," *The Courier-Journal,* July 16, 1967.

[13] Organization of News Ombudsmen, *Editors for the Public: What Are Ombudsmen and Why Should the Media Have Them?* Pamphlet, May 1988 and January 1990.

[14] Donald T. Mogavero, "The American Press Ombudsman," *Journalism Quarterly,* 59: 548-553, 580 (Autumn 1982).

Early research about the news ombudsman in the 1970s took note of the slow rate of acceptance by newspapers, [15] differences in how the newspapers and the ombudsmen conceived the position [16] and acceptance by the staff members and the public. [17] Previous research has focused mainly on the news ombudsman's efforts to provide accountability to the public, though two studies have focused on staff satisfaction with the news ombudsman. These studies have found that employees who worked in the news organization longest and lower levels of educational attainment were more likely to support the news ombudsman's work, [18] though staff members also indicated some degree of doubt about the news ombudsman's ability to be independent of the organization and whether the position exists primarily to advance public relations purposes. [19]

These studies did not examine whether the presence of the news ombudsman influences how the staff members do their work. This article will examine the reaction of staff members to the presence of a news ombudsman and whether the ombudsman's activities influenced the way staff members to their work. It uses a case study approach, which limits the ability to generalize the results to other newspapers but can help suggest areas for further research about subjects that have not been researched in a detailed way. [20] Thus, the case study approach is an effective method for examining both the news ombudsman and media accountability.

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[15] See William L. Barnett, "Survey Shows Few Papers Are Using Ombudsmen," *Journalism Quarterly,* 50: 153-156 (Spring 1973); Suraj Kapoor and Ralph Smith, "The Newspaper Ombudsman -- A Progress Report," *Journalism Quarterly*, 56: 628-631 (Autumn 1979).

[16] See Barnett, *op. cit.*; and Mogavero, *op. cit.*

[17] See David R. Nelsen and Kenneth Starck, "The Newspaper Ombudsman as Viewed by the Rest of the Staff," *Journalism Quarterly,* 51: 453-457 (Autumn 1974); James M. Bernstein, "The Public's View of Newspaper Accountability," *Newspaper Research Journal*, 7 (2); 1-9 (Fall 1986); Barbara W. Hartung, Alfred JaCoby and David M. Dozier, "Readers' Perception of Purpose of Newspaper Ombudsman Program," *Journalism Quarterly*, 65: 914-919 (Winter 1988); Simon Langlois and Florian Sauvageau, "L'image de l'ombudsman de presse dans deux quotidiens canadiens," *Communication Information*, 10 (2-3): 189-210 (1989).

[18] Nelsen and Starck, *op. cit.*

[19] Langlois and Sauvageau, *op. cit.*

## DATA AND METHOD

A combination of qualitative and quantitative methods were used in this study, which was conducted at *The Courier-Journal* in Louisville, Kentucky. *The Courier-Journal* is a morning newspaper that has a daily circulation of 231,042 and 322,104 on Sunday. [21] The key news department person for this study was news ombudsman Stan Slusher, who had been employed at *The Courier-Journal* for 22 years and had been news ombudsman for two and a half years. Before becoming the fourth news ombudsman in Louisville, Slusher had worked as a copy editor, assistant city editor, assistant managing editor, sports editor and regional editor. [22] Slusher worked directly for Editor David Hawpe.

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[20] Roger D. Wimmer and Joseph R. Dominick, *Mass Media Research: An Introduction, Second Edition* (Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1987) pp. 155-157.

[21] *Editor and Publisher International YearBook* (New York: Editor and Publisher Company, 1990), p. I-135.

The qualitative methods employed included observations and personal interviews during October and November 1990. Interviews with 16 *Courier-Journal* employees were conducted during the same time period. In addition, staff members were surveyed to determine their opinions on the usefulness of the news ombudsman and to test possible significant predictors of support for the ombudsman. Employees were given the option of whether to include their names with the questionnaire. Staff members who gave the most insightful responses to the open-ended questions were interviewed for more information. In all, 85 questionnaires out of 261 (32 percent) were returned and included in the study. [23]

## RESULTS

In general, most of the staff members at *The Courier-Journal* had a favorable attitude toward the concept of a news ombudsman. However, staff perceptions of news ombudsman Stan Slusher's status as a member of *The Courier-Journal* news operations varied and offered clear evidence of the news ombudsman's delicate position: Slusher was not perceived as being part of the news staff at *The Courier-Journal* and not truly an independent voice of the newspaper's readers. These attitudes were voiced by the top editors at *The Courier-Journal* as well as reporters and desk editors.

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[22] Everett J. Mitchell II, "News veteran named Courier-Journal ombudsman," *The Courier-Journal*, March 29, 1988.

[23] In an effort to determine the representativeness of the sample, statistics were obtained about the composition of *The Courier-Journal's* staff. In general, the average length of service for supervisors was somewhat longer (19 years) than was found in this study (14.1 years). The average length of service for other staff members, which includes writers, copy editors, and members of the art and photography staffs, was slightly shorter (13 years) than what was found in this study (14.1 years). Sixty-nine percent of *Courier-Journal's* staff members were men, which is somewhat less than the percentage of men reported in this study (59 percent).

Editor David Hawpe said the news ombudsman provides a visible indication that the newspaper takes public complaints seriously.

"I think the existence of the ombudsman sends a signal to the staff that says that we really do care about what readers say and that we care enough to put a senior person in charge of listening to readers. I think that's the chief virtue." [24]

Reporters tended to support the concept of a news ombudsman because it provided a degree of accountability and because the news ombudsman helped them handle particularly difficult complaints.

Ronni Lundy, music and restaurant critic, wrote that the presence of a news ombudsman sometimes made her job easier.

"I think it's terrific," Lundy said. "He serves as an excellent buffer/middleman -- giving irate readers a sympathetic ear and patiently explaining policy and hard decisions to them." [25]

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[24] Personal interview, November 5, 1990.

[25] Written response from the staff questionnaire.

Lundy had cause to use the news ombudsman as a buffer during the study. She received a complaint following a review of the Ole Hickory Pit restaurant that ran in an edition of the newspaper's weekend magazine.

In the review, Lundy wrote that the ribs at the restaurant were "fatty" and that the pork was "nondescript." [26]

The review brought forth a call to Slusher from the restaurant's owners, Sharon and Kenneth Ramage. After talking to the Ramages for 45 minutes, Slusher said that the Ramages were angry because some customers had demanded refunds.

"That's the kind of call where you save yourself a lawsuit," Slusher said. "It has all the elements of one. The guy finally admitted that he didn't think the review would kill them." [27]

Upon checking with Lundy, Slusher found that the review that ran had a long history. It seems that the Ramages had called several times seeking coverage of their restaurant, which had been open for about six months.

"The woman (Sharon Ramage) had no clue what the (restaurant review) column was about, despite everyone's best efforts to explain it to her," Lundy said. "When she first called in, she wanted an ad. She had the idea that they were to cook for me, and I would write something that would get them more business. I must have spent 30 minutes with her on the telephone, trying to explain how the column works."[28]

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[26] Ronni Lundy, "After dark: restaurant news and reviews," *The Courier-Journal*, October 6, 1990.
[27] Personal interview, October 8, 1990.

Lundy said she told the Ramages that perhaps an item could be run in Tipsheet, a regular Feature section item that provides a brief overview of things to do in the community; a story might be written for use in the Neighborhoods section that runs each Wednesday; or that the Business staff might publish something. Lundy said her efforts to educate the Ramages about the responsibilities of a restaurant critic were unsuccessful.

"I told her that I come unannounced and write a review of the experience," Lundy said. "Even after I spent 30 minutes with her on the phone, I knew when I hung up that she still didn't have a clue about what I was trying to do."[29]

Still, the Ramages persisted in trying to get a review of their restaurant. Finally, Lundy agreed to do a review, though she does not usually review neighborhood restaurants.

"If a restaurant with a neighborhood reputation is not good, I will tend to ignore that type of place," Lundy said. "I see no reason to tell the entire city if the (restaurant) review is bad."[30]

After the review appeared, Lundy received a call at home from the Ramages.

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[28] Telephone interview, October 28, 1990.

[29] *Ibid.*

[30] *Ibid.*

> I told them I would be happy to talk to them at the office, and that I didn't want them calling me at home. I tried one more time to explain to them what it is that I do. I don't know if I suggested they call Stan (Slusher) or not, but that's where they ended up, and that's the appropriate place for them to be. [31]

Slusher talked to the Ramages twice on the same day in an effort to resolve the complaint. He failed.

"That's one of those instances where the lines of communication were never very good," Slusher said. "These folks seemed to be less sophisticated about the business and how the newspaper worked." [32]

After the initial discussions, Slusher tried repeatedly to call the Ramages, but repeatedly got an answering machine. He left messages that were never returned.

Finally, a month later, Slusher sent the Ramages a letter that detailed what he could do about the situation. He said:

> If they want to come back to me with a proposal for a letter, if it's in good taste and not libelous, then we can print it. If they want to come back to me in six months and say things have changed here, how about reviewing us again? I'll recommend that we do that, but I will make sure they understand that there's no guarantee that it will be something they will like. [33]

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[31] *Ibid.*
[32] Personal interview, November 2, 1990.
[33] *Ibid.*

Despite the breakdown in communication, Lundy said that the presence of the news ombudsman helped resolve the situation -- as much as it could be.

"I think it is a good example of why Stan is valuable," Lundy said. I can't continue to deal with that every day. It's helpful to have Stan there to explain the situation, though I don't know if that one will ever be resolved." [34]

Aside from serving as a potential buffer between staff members and angry complainants, the news ombudsman provided practical suggestions on how to improve the quality of the newspaper and sensitized staff members concerns lodged by readers.

Reporter Grace Schneider indicated the presence of the news ombudsman help sensitize staff members to the potential the newspaper has for printing information that may be used in a negative way.

Schneider, a reporter at *The Courier-Journal* for seven years, recalled an incident where she had edited a story about a man who was going out of town and that fact was mentioned in the newspaper.

"The man, a champion truck pull competitor, was later burglarized and blamed us for tipping off prospective burglars," Schneider wrote. [35]

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[34] Telephone interview, October 8, 1990.
[35] Written response from the staff questionnaire.

Schneider said Slusher's investigation turned up conflicting stories of whether the information was on the record: the reporter said it was, the source said it wasn't.

"Stan's investigation sensitized us to such questions," she wrote. [36]

She valued his role in the organization for that reason.

"Generally, I thought Stan's evaluations were fair," Schneider wrote. "He asked reasonable questions. I do feel he plays a valuable role, as any ombudsman does in a newspaper set up." [37]

Many comments from readers were about accuracy and the presentation of information in the newspaper. No group of newsroom employees may be in a better position to have their work judged by the news ombudsman than the news clerks. The news clerks often take obituaries, handle police news and many items where mistakes can be made easily.

Lela Randle, a clerk-writer at *The Courier-Journal* for 13 years, wrote that she disagreed with the news ombudsman's conclusion about her work once but that she generally supported the concept.

"[I] feel it's valuable to have someone serve as an in-house 'watchdog,'" she wrote. "(Someone) who serves our readers. I sometimes bring news items or pictures to the ombudsman's attention that I felt were handled inappropriately. Usually from a reader's point of view." [38]

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[36] *Ibid.*
[37] *Ibid.*

Kevin Baker, a news clerk at *The Courier-Journal* for two years, also supported the concept. Baker cited an instance when a caller suggested a change to the news ombudsman that resulted in an improved the weather page. [39]

Baker didn't take the complaint personally.

"He (the caller) wasn't really talking about my performance but a newspaper policy," Baker wrote. "His suggestions just made the product better." [40]

Sometimes, the news ombudsman's activities created the potential for conflict with the staff members, particularly when they came to opposite conclusions about the staff member's work.

For example, Features writer Yvonne Eaton recalled one incident where she and the news ombudsman came to different conclusions about her reporting about collectable items in Louisville. Her local story was eventually distributed nationally by Gannett News Service, and that's where the problems began.

Eaton received a complaint from a caller in Chattanooga, Tennessee, who felt her story should have included an item that was a popular collectable nationally but not in Louisville. She said that Slusher consulted with her and eventually sided with the reader in a sense.

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[38] Written response from the staff questionnaire.
[39] Written response from the staff questionnaire.
[40] Written response from the staff questionnaire.

> I felt he (Slusher) was right in asking me for my opinion and how the story transpired. But I disagreed with his deduction that I should have called places that specialized in the item. Naturally, if one (dealer) specialized in one item, he'll say it's still very collectable. Besides, I only quoted my sources. It wasn't my opinion. Basically, he (Slusher) felt the caller or writer was right. I didn't. My editors agreed with me![41]

But in general, Slusher received high marks for the importance of his role and how he handled it from *Courier-Journal* staff members.

Table 1 about here

The staff survey at *The Courier-Journal* revealed general support for the concept that the news ombudsman was necessary as a representative of the readers and the contention that the news ombudsman's activities did not demoralize employees. More than 90 percent of *Courier-Journal* staff members agreed that the news ombudsman is necessary as a representative of the readers, while only about 6 percent said that the news ombudsman isn't necessary because the newspaper has editors.

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[41] Written response from the staff questionnaire.

*Courier-Journal* staff members showed some reluctance to judge whether the news ombudsman could be truly independent of the newspaper. Yet almost a third of the *Courier-Journal* staff members felt neutral over whether the news ombudsman was capable of true independence.

Managing Editor Irene Nolan believed the news ombudsman is perceived neither as independent nor as part of the newsroom staff.

"I think readers perceive him as being part of what's here, as being a part of the newspaper and its staff," Nolan said. "I also think the reporters have some skepticism that says he's not really one of us. So in a sense he's not perceived as being on either side completely. He's out there by himself." [42]

Deputy Managing Editor Stephen Ford said the fact that Slusher has no daily administrative responsibilities in the newsroom enhances his independence from the staff members, though he conceded that the news ombudsman's status as an employee makes complete independence impossible. [43]

Ford's statement may be technically true, but in practice the news ombudsman may be in a position to influence staff members because of his efforts to compile information on data that may be used by editors in personnel evaluations. Slusher also receives the explanations made by reporters and editors for their mistakes. [44]

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[42] Personal interview, October 16, 1990.
[43] Personal interview, October 25, 1990.

These activities gave indication of a different kind of accountability than that traditionally associated with the work of the news ombudsman. This accountability is internal in nature. It emphasizes the obligation the staff members have to account for their activities to the news ombudsman.

An example of how the internal accountability functioned was detected in the news ombudsman's role in maintaining error records of staff members and the subsequent use of these records in personnel evaluations.

The decision to include error records in personnel evaluations was part of a new correction policy adopted by Editor David Hawpe and Managing Editor Irene Nolan in 1989: "We expect supervisors to address accuracy in the annual performance evaluations of reporter, copy editors, photographers, news clerks and others and to discuss avoidable errors with staff members who commit them." [45]

Nolan said the decision to include consideration of errors in performance evaluations was based on the need to impress on staff members the seriousness of committing errors. [46]

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[44] Telephone interviews, November 28, 1990 and December 7, 1990.

[45] David Hawpe and Irene Nolan, "Corrections and Clarifications Policy -- October 1989," staff memorandum, October 17, 1989. When interviewed, Nolan admitted that the policy had not been fully implemented at the time of this study.

[46] Personal interview, October 16, 1990.

*The Courier-Journal* had an involved system for obtaining explanations for correctable errors. Slusher's role was that of collector of the final report. The correction system required all staff members who had a role in a story, graphic or cutlines to provide explanations for their actions. The policy called for the ombudsman to receive the completed explanation within 10 days of the publication of the error. The policy included a provision to take into consideration repeated tardiness in completing corrections reports in personnel evaluations. [47]

Slusher downplayed his role as an internal accountability mechanism; he saw himself as a technician who was responsible for spotting trends in errors. [48]

Slusher said he will provide information about individuals' error records upon requests from supervisors as part of salary reviews. He also "kicks back" any explanations about errors that he finds unsatisfactory to the editors or reporters involved, though reporters and editors often forget what happened by the time Slusher requests additional information. [49]

Desk editors differed in how they used the information that Slusher provided, ranging from documentation of serious problems with staff members to supplementing data already compiled by the desk editor. [50]

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[47] Hawpe and Nolan, *op. cit.*
[48] Telephone interview, December 7, 1990.
[49] *Ibid.*
[50] Personal interview with City Editor Ralph Dunlop, October 24, 1990; personal interview with Neighborhoods Editor Linda Raymond, October 23, 1990.

For his part, Slusher had no problem with his involvement in compiling the corrections because he did not believe that it brought him into the daily management of the newspaper. He saw his role as being a member of the administrative team of *The Courier-Journal's* news operations. [51]

The finding that the staff members may have an obligation to render an account of their activities to the news ombudsman suggests that the presence of a news ombudsman may make staff members work more carefully, knowing that they are accountable to him for explanations when errors occur.

As a result, three questions in the survey were used as dependent variables to determine the news ombudsman's influence on staff members. [52] These included questions that probed staff members' perceptions of whether the news ombudsman was (1) useful to themselves; (2) useful to their colleagues and (3) whether the presence of the news ombudsman caused staff members to work more carefully. These issues are significant because the news ombudsman's value to the organization depends on whether staff members individually and collectively perceive his role in providing accountability to the public as worthwhile. In addition, all three questions relate to the second kind of accountability: the obligation staff members have to render an account of their activities to the news ombudsman. To the extent that the staff members individually and collectively find the news ombudsman useful and work more carefully because of his presence, the more likely it might be that the news ombudsman is in a position to make staff members accountable to him.

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[51] Personal interview, October 16, 1990.

[52] An attempt was made to create an index that would have been a stronger measurement of attitudes towards the news ombudsman than single questions. A factor analysis produced by SPSS revealed that three questions would make the strongest possible index: the news ombudsman was not necessary because editors existed; the news ombudsman was incapable of independence from the newspaper; and the news ombudsman functioned primarily as a public relations device. However, a reliability check of the index produced a Cronbach's alpha of .60, a figure that was deemed too low to warrant use of the index.

In each case, multiple regression was used to determine the relative influence of gender, education, years of experience at the newspaper and whether the news ombudsman had evaluated the staff member's work as independent variables. Education and years of experience had previously been shown to be significant predictors of staff satisfaction with the news ombudsman, [53] while theoretical considerations would lead one to expect that women might be more likely to consider the news ombudsman necessary because they place greater value in relationships. [54] Finally, staff members who have had their work evaluated might find the news ombudsman's work more useful because they were familiar with the news ombudsman's activities and perceived that the position enhanced public confidence in the newspaper. [55]

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[53] Nelsen and Starck, *op. cit.*

[54] See Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982). In addition, women tended to view the work of the public access editor at *The St. Petersburg Times* as being more important than men in Nelsen and Starck, *op. cit.*, p. 456.

[55] Nelsen and Starck, *op. cit.*, also found evidence that employees whose work had been evaluated by the public access editor at *The St. Petersburg Times* were more willing to give the access editor a "free hand" in evaluations. Those staff members who had their work evaluated by the public access editor also felt the presence of the public access editor gave readers more confidence in the newspaper.

Table 2 displays the results of the regression analysis when the staff members' perception of the news ombudsman's usefulness was the dependent variable.

Table 2 about here

The number of years worked emerged as the only significant predictor of the staff perception that the news ombudsman was useful to the individual staff member. This finding is consistent with the study of staff satisfaction done at *The St. Petersburg Times* in the 1970s.[56] Respondents' sex, education and whether the news ombudsman had evaluated their work were not significantly related to whether they thought the news ombudsman was useful. The influence of longevity in the news organization disappeared when the focus was on staff members' perceptions of their colleagues views on the news ombudsman's usefulness, though it was very close to being significant. None of the independent variables was a strong predictor of staff members' perceptions of their colleagues' views about the news ombudsman.

Finally, whether the news ombudsman had evaluated the staff member's work emerged as a strong predictor of whether staff members worked more carefully as a result of the news ombudsman's presence. Table 3 shows this relationship, controlling for education, gender and length of service.

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[56] Nelsen and Starck, *op. cit.*

Table 3 about here

The finding has at least two possible implications: the presence of a news ombudsman may make staff members work harder to avoid making errors, or the presence of a news ombudsman may discourage staff members from doing complicated stories that are more likely to contain errors and stories that arouse controversy.

## DISCUSSION

This study provides evidence that the news ombudsman can occupy a favorable light in the eyes of the staff members in a news organization. This finding is consistent with studies of the news ombudsman's work at *The St. Petersburg Times, The Montreal Gazette* and *The Toronto Star.* [57]

From the staff member's standpoint, the news ombudsman can be used as a buffer to avoid or reduce having to deal with angry complainants. While this role provides the news organization with the potential benefit of having complaints handled by a more detached observer, it also introduces the risk that staff members may divert complaints of a more routine nature to the news ombudsman simply to avoid conflict and contact with the public. While this study found nothing to support that possibility, there is some evidence that staff members have failed to refer complaints to the ombudsman for fear of being criticized in internal memoranda. [58] This notion is consistent with one possible explanation for the major statistical finding in this study: the staff members' tendency to work more carefully if their work had been evaluated by the news ombudsman. Staff members may work more carefully and diligently to avoid making mistakes if they know their errors may be exposed -- either to other staff members through internal memoranda or to the public if the news ombudsman writes a column. Yet the same finding may be interpreted in a different light that coincides with the fear that staff members may have in dealing with the ombudsman: withholding complex and difficult information from the public. If the staff member fears being "exposed" by the news ombudsman either to colleagues or the public for making errors, the staff member may simply decide to omit material that is more likely to come under review by the ombudsman -- complex and controversial material -- rather than risk possible criticism and censure. The evidence in this study does not support such a conclusion; staff members at *The Courier-Journal* don't believe the news ombudsman demoralizes them. Yet the potential for withholding such information should prove troubling to those view the news media as public watchdogs. For if the presence of a news ombudsman discourages the staff member from communicating information to the public that is complex and controversial for fear of being criticized when mistakes occur, then the concept of a news ombudsman indirectly works against the historical tradition of a free press. This possibility demands closer attention from future researchers.

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[57] Nelsen and Starck, *op. cit.*, p. 457 and Langlois and Sauvageau, *op. cit.*, p. 199.

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[58] Bezanson, Cranberg and Soloski, *op. cit.*, pp. 35-37.

Despite that possibility, the evidence in this study indicated that the staff members at *The Courier-Journal* considered the news ombudsman valuable. And the reason for that judgment seems clear: the staff members valued having someone to whom difficult complainants can be referred and someone who can suggest changes that improve the quality of the news organization. These judgments represent a major advantage to the news organization, though it seems these activities created division among *Courier-Journal* staff members over the news ombudsman's independence from the news organization and role in advancing the news organization's public relations. This interpretation is consistent with the sense of conflict the ombudsman themselves perceive in these roles. [59]

Yet these issues may be false ones. No news ombudsman can be truly independent of the news organization that employs him.

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[59] James S. Ettema and Theodore L. Glasser, "Public Accountability or Public Relations? Newspaper Ombudsmen Define Their Role," *Journalism Quarterly,* 64: 3-12 (Spring 1987).

In addition, the nature of the news ombudsman's work requires the handling and resolving of complaints lodged by the public. This fact should make it clear that advancing the news organization's public relations is the natural result of a news ombudsman who successfully resolves complaints.

This study provides evidence that the concept of media accountability must include the relationship between the staff members and the news ombudsman. It is a concept that the staff members of *The Courier-Journal* accept by indicating the need for the news ombudsman as a reader representative and the judgment that editors cannot perform the same function as the news ombudsman. In Louisville, the news ombudsman's role as an accountability mechanism seems to be an accepted part of the news operation, though the staff members question the news ombudsman's role as an accountability mechanism to the public. Their confusion over the news ombudsman's independence and public relations role may be caused by a hazy definition of media accountability. If Pritchard's view of media accountability is correct, it is enough for the news ombudsman to render an account to the public that includes defending the news organization's decisions. If that is the case, the independence and public relations concerns become secondary, for the news ombudsman's effort to offer an explanation to a constituency -- including one that's not critical -- constitutes accountability. It would seem that former *Minneapolis Star Tribune* Editor Charles W. Bailey was right when he wrote that media criticism was beyond what could be expected of a news ombudsman. [60] In the end, it may be the form of media accountability that occurs among professionals -- and between the news ombudsman and the staff members within a news organization -- that does the most to ensure a responsible and fair news media.

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[60] Charles W. Bailey, "Newspapers Need Ombudsmen," *Washington Journalism Review,* 12 (9): 29-34 (November 1990).

Table 1: Staff satisfaction with the news ombudsman at The Courier-Journal

| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly disagree | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| The ombudsman: | | | | | | |
| Is a necessary representative of readers. | 37.6% | 54.1% | 4.7% | 2.4% | 1.2% | 85 |
| Is not necessary because editors exist. | 1.2% | 4.7% | 4.7% | 55.3% | 34.1% | 85 |
| Is incapable of real independence. | 1.2% | 22.3% | 31.8% | 42.3% | 2.4% | 85 |
| Serves primarily a public relations function. | 5.9% | 29.4% | 10.6% | 47.1% | 7.0% | 85 |
| Tends to demoralize the staff members. | 1.2% | 1.2% | 12.0% | 63.9% | 21.7% | 83 |
| Causes staff members to work more carefully. | 4.8% | 35.7% | 34.5% | 19.0% | 6.0% | 84 |

Table 2: Whether the individual staff members considered the news ombudsman useful

| | Bivariate correlation | Standardized regression coefficient |
|---|---|---|
| Gender | .06 | .11 |
| Education | -.09 | -.06 |
| Years of Experience | .20* | .23* |
| Story evaluated by ombudsman | .17 | .15 |

N = 78

R Square = .09
Adjusted R Square = .04

* significant at .05 for one-tail test

Table 3: Whether the news ombudsman causes staff members to work more carefully

| | Bivariate correlation | Standardized regression coefficient |
|---|---|---|
| Gender | -.07 | -.04 |
| Education | -.04 | -.03 |
| Years of Experience | .02 | -.01 |
| Story evaluated by ombudsman | .28** | .27* |

N = 79
R Square = .08
Adjusted R Square = .03

* Significant at less than .05 for one-tailed test.

** Significant at less than .01 for one-tailed test.

# EFFECTS OF JOINT OPERATING AGREEMENTS
# ON NEWSPAPER COMPETITION AND EDITORIAL PERFORMANCE

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# EFFECTS OF JOINT OPERATING AGREEMENTS ON NEWSPAPER COMPETITION AND EDITORIAL PERFORMANCE

Joint operating agreements provoke a great deal of debate within the newspaper industry.[1] Their supporters maintain that the pacts preserve two independent news and editorial voices in cities that otherwise might have only one. Opponents charge that joint operations are used to eliminate newspaper competition that otherwise might have been preserved. But curiously journalists who work for jointly operated newspapers are seldom heard from concerning arguments related to the controversial public policy issue despite their firsthand perspective.

This is the first systematic study to ask JOA journalists their opinions about the influence of the agreements on newspaper competition and editorial performance. A primary objective was to determine not only whether joint ventures were viewed as preventing the demise of a second daily but also what effects they were perceived as having on new newspaper competition and other papers competing in the same vicinity. Another important purpose was to learn whether the respondents saw jointly operated newspapers as preserving editorial independence and providing better news coverage than monopoly newspapers.

Despite the attention paid to joint operating agreements, they are found in only a small number of cities. Nineteen partnerships exist today; the same number as when the Newspaper Preservation Act authorizing JOAs was passed by Congress in 1970.[2] Taken into account are the seven joint ventures that have been dissolved and the seven new ones established since the law's enactment. Currently, there are no applications before the Justice Department for a new joint operating arrangement between competing newspapers.

## Market constraints

The number of daily newspapers in this country continues to dwindle. Los Angeles, Washington, Philadelphia, Baltimore and Dallas are only a handful of major markets that have lost newspapers in recent years and become essentially one-newspaper cities. This loss of competition is attributed to the economies of scale that give a significant advantage to large circulation newspapers through a lower cost per reader than smaller papers.[3] As a consequence, newspapers with the largest circulation inevitably achieve the greatest production efficiency.

Another characteristic of the newspaper industry that fosters the steady decline of competitive markets is the circulation spiral. The newspaper that gains an edge in circulation quickly achieves a proportional advantage in revenue from advertisers who want to reach the maximum number of readers. As a result, the smaller circulation newspaper generates less revenue and has fewer resources to devote to its editorial content. The paper then becomes less attractive to readers causing a further decline in circulation. Newspapers caught in this downward spiral seldom are able to reverse the cycle.[4] Recent analysis of JOA markets found that the leading newspaper increased its circulation percentage in 12 markets, while four markets showed little change. The trailing newspaper improved its circulation share in only two markets.[5]

**Impact of JOAs on competition**

Given the trend toward the disappearance of competitive newspaper markets, the question becomes whether two dailies are published in cities that probably would have only one without a joint partnership. Blankenburg examined two-newspaper firms that eliminated an afternoon or morning edition during a 15-year period and estimated that at least five JOA markets would have only one newspaper if it were not for the agreement.[6] But joint revenue failed to ensure solvency for the newspapers in the St. Louis pact, the Post-Dispatch and the Globe-Democrat, which lost $11 million from 1978 to 1981. The joint operating arrangement was dissolved; the strapped Globe-Democrat was sold in 1984 and folded a few years later.[7]

Corroborating critics' worst suspicions about the economic motives of JOA partners, the Miami agreement perversely created the single-newspaper monopoly it was supposed to prevent. The joint venture was quietly renegotiated in 1987 to allow the owner of the News, which was losing $9 million annually, to share the operating revenues of the prosperous Herald whether or not the News was published. Furthermore, the News' share of the profits was extended from 1996 until the year 2021. It was estimated that the paper's owner could earn $300 million under the new arrangement which eliminated the incentive for the News to stay in business.[8]

Press critic Stephen Barnett charges that the Miami News was "rubbed out" as part of the "JOA endgame in which the owner of the weaker paper is paid to kill it off." He further asserts, "The same fate now stalks Hearst's San Francisco Examiner and probably awaits, after a decent interval, Gannett's Detroit News -- which was declared 'dominant' for the purpose of gaining the JOA that now is doing it in."[9] The Knoxville Journal was recently paid $40 million by the larger News-Sentinel for agreeing to terminate their joint partnership at the start of 1992. The Journal has become a weekly, making its former partner the only daily published in Knoxville.[10]

Joint operations are sometimes criticized for forestalling sale to an outside publisher who would preserve both editorial and commercial competition. The Seattle Times and Post-Intelligencer were permitted to establish a joint pact in 1983 despite the contention of the Justice Department's Antitrust Division that the application should be denied because there were potential buyers who would maintain the Post-Intelligencer as an independent paper.[11]

There is validity to the contention that JOAs are a barrier to potential new entrants. It is easier to start a newspaper in a market where only one other daily operates than in competition with a joint partnership which enjoys the cost savings of combined production and distribution systems. However, the initial rationale for authorizing joint operating agreements was based on the premise that most cities could support only one profitable daily newspaper. Therefore, it also can be argued that JOAs seldom exclude new competition because most markets cannot sustain additional newspapers.[12]

Concern is expressed that joint arrangements may result in fewer and lower circulation suburban newspapers. But an examination of six matched JOA and competitive markets found no differences in the number of suburban newspapers. In addition, suburban newspapers in JOA markets were shown to have more than twice the circulation of those in markets with competing metropolitan dailies.[13] A case study of the Seattle market after the city's two major papers formed a JOA found that four suburban newspapers increased circulation and profits following the merger.[14]

## Impact of JOAs on performance

Articles discussing joint operating agreements appear regularly in Editor & Publisher and other newspaper industry trade publications. The focus is usually on economic issues and seldom on concerns about diminished editorial independence. However, the nature of a JOA necessitates a close business relationship between the member papers that can potentially influence news coverage and editorial opinions. Where they have a mutual financial interest, neither jointly operated newspaper may choose to report or comment on a public issue damaging to that interest. Editors and reporters "curb their tendencies to take to task the businesses or institutions sleeping with the publisher of the other paper," a former Post-Intelligencer investigative reporter said about the Seattle pact.[15] Furthermore, a JOA newspaper may not adequately report an incident involving its partner. The San Francisco Examiner provided scant coverage of the Chronicle's failed bid to renew the broadcast license of its television station.[16]

The procedure for obtaining a JOA reportedly also can have harmful effects on press autonomy. While the Detroit JOA application was pending before Attorney General Edwin Meese, Knight-Ridder's Detroit Free Press "killed editorial cartoons and toned down editorials" critical of his official conduct. The group's flagship paper, the Miami Herald, cooperated by instructing its editorial cartoonist "to lay off Meese."[17] This incident suggests that lobbying for JOA designation can prevent the press from performing its constitutional role of independent watchdog of government.

There is also concern that newspapers place less emphasis on editorial diversity after becoming joint partners. Opponents claim that JOAs have increased the homogenization of daily newspapers[18] by often mirroring each other in their news coverage and editorial viewpoints.[19] Lending support to this contention, an empirical study concluded that jointly operated newspapers did not consistently provide two distinct community voices for the 10 categories of news topics analyzed.[20]

It is argued that the lack of direct competition between joint operations eliminates the economic incentive to improve the caliber of news coverage. Instead the most expedient action that JOA newspapers can take is to cut news costs and thereby increase their shared profits.[21] Lacy found, however, that jointly operated newspapers are more similar to competitive newspapers than to monopoly newspapers in the way they spend money on editorial content.[22] Moreover, Entman suggests that since JOA newspapers are alleviated from the strict economic pressures faced by competing dailies, their staffs may have greater opportunity to provide more extensive news coverage. He reported that JOA newspapers average significantly more staff-originated stories than competitive papers.[23] Often applied as a measure of newspaper quality, commitment to staff written copy signifies a publisher's willingness to allocate funds on news content.

Research comparing the editorial quality of jointly operated and monopoly newspapers offers inconclusive results due to methodological and sample population differences. In an investigation of 101 dailies, Litman and Bridges found no significant differences in quality between JOA newspapers and monopoly newspapers regarding news staff size, total news inches and proportion of space devoted to news.[24] However, a 1991 study of large circulation newspapers indicated that jointly operated newspapers had smaller news staffs and carried fewer wire services than single newspaper monopolies.[25] The fact that these studies show no positive correlation between JOA newspapers and improved quality should not be surprising. A much larger body of research generally finds that competitive newspapers also fail to provide measurable content advantages when matched with monopoly papers.[26]

In the context of the previous literature devoted to economic and content analysis, this study examines JOA journalists' impressions of whether joint ventures are beneficial to newspaper competition and press performance. The results are based on the responses of a representative sample of journalists from about two-thirds of the jointly operated newspapers. The survey was designed to answer these primary research questions:

1) Do JOAs prevent the demise of newspaper competition in cities that probably would have only one daily without the agreement or eliminate competition that otherwise might have been preserved?

2) Do joint partnerships permit other newspaper competition or hinder papers competing in the same market and in nearby suburban markets?

3) Do the agreements preserve editorial independence between member papers or inhibit autonomy by the close relationship required to make joint business decisions?

4) Do joint operations offer their newspapers content advantages over monopoly dailies or provide the incentive to cut editorial costs and increase revenues?

## Methods

Managing editors of the 42 jointly operated newspapers that existed in early 1991 were asked to provide complete lists of their full-time newsroom personnel. Names and job titles of journalists were received from 27 newspapers representing 18 of the 21 JOA markets (Table 1). Questionnaires were sent to a third of the 1,355 journalists on the participating newspapers. Two mailings elicited responses from 269 journalists for a 60% completion rate. Sixty-two percent of the respondents held non-managerial newsroom positions, such as reporter or copy editor.[27]

The inclusive managerial and non-managerial job classifications of editor and reporter were used to differentiate between journalists' attitudes toward joint operating agreements. Differences in the professional roles of editors and reporters can affect their perceptions. Although editors normally have news reporting backgrounds, their function is usually more that of a manager than a journalist. As it turned out, differences in types of newspapers worked for could not be applied as a distinguishing variable because most journalists had previous experience on competitive or monopoly newspapers.

The vast majority of journalists involved in joint operating arrangements work for mid-size or large newspapers. Reflecting this fact, only three newspapers in this study were under 40,000 circulation. By comparison, 13 papers were between 40,000 and 100,000 circulation, and 11 others were more than 100,000 circulation. Each circulation group was treated as a separate sampling frame to maximize representation of journalists in each circulation category.

Journalists on medium and large circulation newspapers were selected by systematic random sampling technique in proportion to the staff size of their paper. For the three small newspapers, all eligible staffers were included. They were too few, however, to permit a meaningful comparison of their attitudes with those of their other JOA colleagues. Respondents from small circulation newspapers made up only 12% of the sample compared with 40% for mid-size papers and 48% for large papers.

## Results

About six in 10 journalists on jointly operated newspapers were male, and most were more than 30 years old. A large plurality were seasoned veterans who had worked at newspapers for more than a decade; half had been at their present paper for more than five years. A majority earned between $25,000 and $50,000 annually. However, about a third earned less than $25,000, and fewer than 10% earned more than $50,000. Based on companion data, JOA journalists were more likely to receive lower salaries than their colleagues on monopoly and competitive newspapers.

Further, although virtually all of the respondents graduated from college, the 8% who held an advanced degree were substantially fewer than those on non-JOA dailies with equivalent education. Journalism or mass communication was studied by nearly 60% of the college graduates and by a similar percentage of those who pursued graduate work.

## Attitudes toward JOAs

About three-quarters of JOA journalists agreed that the pacts have prevented the demise of newspapers in markets that probably would not have two papers without the arrangement. The remainder supported the counter contention that joint operations have been used to eliminate newspaper competition that otherwise might have been preserved. In either case, 45% of the respondents predicted that JOA cities will be the only competitive markets remaining in 20 years, but nearly as many journalists were non-committal.

When asked if joint operations raise entry barriers, about six in 10 journalists maintained that the agreements prohibit new competition in the newspaper market. Half also indicated that a joint venture adversely affects other newspapers competing in the same market and in nearby suburban markets. But about a quarter were neutral or not sure about the impact on those papers.

Two-thirds of the respondents disagreed that editorial independence in JOAs is inhibited by the close relationship required to make joint business decisions. Nearly the same percentage said the level of news gathering rivalry between competitive newspapers is usually unchanged when they become jointly operated.

Three-fourths of the respondents maintained that jointly operated newspapers provide additional benefit to the public over a monopoly newspaper. There was strong agreement (91%) that JOA newspapers provide greater diversity of news and editorial opinions than a single newspaper. Jointly operated newspapers were also largely viewed (81%) as providing higher quality local news coverage than monopoly papers. However, a plurality claimed that a joint arrangement provides the incentive to cut news coverage costs; almost a quarter were neutral or undecided.

Few journalists indicated that JOAs should be discontinued, and a substantial number did not want the pacts changed (Table 2). Even among those who favored amending the agreements, there was meager support for any particular modification. Only about two in 10 journalists said joint ventures should apply solely to independently owned newspapers or should be permitted to operate for just as long as it takes to recoup previous losses. Even less interest was expressed in having JOAs run as public utilities and required to print any local newspaper desiring services.

Reporters and editors did not differ measurably in their prevailing positive attitudes toward joint operating agreements. Their similar educational backgrounds and shared journalistic experience may help to explain the lack of disparity in their responses. Typically, however, reporters have worked in the business a shorter time than editors and have undergone less professional socialization. As a consequence, they might be expected to be more critical of various aspects of joint arrangements.

Although there were too few respondents on small papers to include in an analysis based on circulation, some differences in perceptions were evident between journalists on large and medium-size newspapers. Journalists on large newspapers were less likely to contend that joint agreements have saved a second paper (70% compared with 84%: $p < .01$) and more often indicated that JOAs have terminated direct newspaper competition that might have continued without the arrangement (30% compared with 16%: $p < .01$). They were also more inclined to agree that editorial independence and news gathering rivalry are diminished and news expenditures are reduced when newspapers enter into a joint partnership (Table 3).

A significant contributing factor to these differences in viewpoints were the critical responses of journalists in the Detroit venture who worked for two of the three largest JOA newspapers in the United States. The 1989 agreement was approved in a highly charged atmosphere resulting from a 42-month legal and public relations battle with an opposition group of citizens, employees and advertisers.[28] An apparent outcome was that many Free Press and News journalists were skeptical about the motives of the nation's biggest newspaper publishers -- Gannett and Knight-Ridder -- for entering into a joint partnership and troubled about its impact on their newspapers' journalistic performance.

## Discussion and Conclusions

Joint operating agreements characterize a public policy that espouses maintenance of separate editorial voices. Most JOA journalists contended that joint arrangements have allowed two newspapers to publish in cities that probably otherwise would have only a single newspaper. This response may be largely attributable to their perception that a JOA saved either the newspaper they worked for or its joint partner. But critics point to recent JOA failures, including the Knoxville and Shreveport pacts represented in this study, as proof that the agreements do not save newspapers. The important question has become whether the monopoly advantages of a joint venture are enough to preserve a second daily. In the end what may determine whether the weaker newspaper in a pact survives is the willingness of its owner to commit the resources necessary to combat formidable market forces, such as economies of scale and the circulation spiral, that produce one-newspaper cities.

Few respondents indicated that JOAs have been used to eliminate newspaper competition that otherwise might have been preserved. Nevertheless, evidence suggests that joint operations sometimes have produced the newspaper monopolies they were intended to prevent, such as when the owner of the weaker paper is paid handsomely to cease publication. In addition, competition is diminished when a joint partnership is formed despite prospective buyers for the trailing newspaper who would operate it separately and independently. These actions are criticized for violating the intent of the antitrust exemption permitting joint operating agreements and perceived as simply serving to make both publishers richer.

A sizeable majority of journalists maintained that joint operations thwart new newspaper competition. Increased production and distribution efficiencies do raise a higher barrier to entry than would exist if the weaker newspaper had shut down or the two newspapers had merged. For practical purposes, however, the barrier may be more a result of the size of the market than the fact that the market has a JOA. Instances of new entrants in medium-size and large cities, which are most likely to have JOAs, are extremely rare because of the high start-up costs of a daily newspaper big enough to compete in those markets.

Half of the respondents agreed that a JOA hinders newspapers competing in the same market and surrounding suburban markets. Although it may be questionable public policy to provide a monopoly advantage to two dailies in preference to other existing newspapers which function as additional editorial voices, research indicates that joint operations have not deterred the growth of suburban newspapers.[29] However, study needs to made of the agreements' effects on the economic health of other intracity newspapers.

Journalists largely disagreed that a JOA newspaper's editorial autonomy is inhibited by the close relationship required to make joint business decisions. A characteristic of an independent newspaper is its ability to remain objective, but it is suggested that JOA newspapers may be reluctant to report on incidents harmful to a mutual interest or a joint partner. Study is needed to determine the degree of autonomy practiced by jointly operated newspapers. In addition, future research might explore methods of indirect control that may restrict editorial independence within joint partnerships.

Nearly all of the journalists claimed that JOA newspapers provide greater diversity of news and editorial opinions than monopoly newspapers. Their assertion supports conventional wisdom that competition among newspapers fosters editorial diversity. However, evidence suggests that separate news departments often fail to provide two distinct editorial voices.[30] Newspapers competing in the same market appear to be largely similar in content due to shared news values and ethical standards, such as objectivity and fairness. Standardized work practices and organizational constraints also have a homogenizing influence on the news product.

Although most respondents maintained that JOA newspapers provide higher quality local news coverage than monopoly papers, a plurality also indicated that a joint operation provides the incentive to cut news costs. They may be right on both counts. A study several years ago indicated that JOA newspapers spend more money on news content than monopoly newspapers.[31] But at the same time profit sharing by jointly operated newspapers may reduce expenditures on editorial quality over what they might be otherwise. The reason is simple. There is no economic incentive for improving caliber of coverage to gain an edge in circulation on the other partner. JOA newspapers receive the same earnings no matter which one attracts more readers. Future research might analyze the content of jointly operated newspapers for defined periods before and after they became partners to determine the pacts' effects on quality of news coverage.

Few respondents favored doing away with joint operating agreements. It is reasonable to expect that there was the shared expectation that terminating the ventures would result in newspaper closings and loss of jobs. The adverse effects that such closings would have on readers is less obvious since separate news operations have not been shown to provide significant content benefits over a single newspaper. However, one negative result of the death of a JOA newspaper would be a substantial decrease in the amount of news and opinion provided to the community. Two newspapers publish more news than a single newspaper regardless of whether the survivor increases its coverage after gaining a monopoly.[32] Another undesirable outcome would be a loss of circulation in the former JOA market. Some readers stop taking a newspaper after one of the competing papers ceases publication.[33]

The purpose of this study was to explore JOA journalists' perceptions of the impact of joint partnerships on newspaper competition and editorial performance. Respondents concurred with empirical evidence showing that joint ventures preserve a second editorial voice but contradicted studies finding no correlation between jointly operated newspapers and improved content. No significant differences in responses emerged between editors and reporters. Respondents in the Detroit partnership were primarily responsible for journalists on large circulation newspapers holding more critical views of the agreements than those on mid-size papers.

The fact that respondents generally expressed favorable attitudes toward JOAs appears to have been partially the result of their similar professional socialization which increases acceptance of organizational structure and performance. This process might also help to explain why, according to some respondents, salient issues directly pertaining to joint operation were seldom widely discussed at their newspapers. Future research might measure JOA journalists' degree of knowledge about and commitment to the economic and editorial responsibilities of jointly operated newspapers.

## NOTES

1. Under a controversial antitrust exemption, separately owned newspapers are allowed to combine business operations for efficiency and economy while keeping their editorial departments separate.

2. At the time of the Newspaper Preservation Act's passage, 22 cities were presented to Congress as having JOA newspapers. Subsequently, it was determined that three cities (Lincoln, Neb., Madison, Wis., and Bristol, Tenn. and Va.) should not have been so designated.

3. See James N. Rosse, "The Decline of Direct Newspaper Competition," Journal of Communication 30:65-71 (1980).

4. See Karl Erik Gustafsson, "The Circulation Spiral and the Principle of Household Coverage," Scandinavian Economic History Review 26:1-14 (1978); Robert G. Picard, "Evidence of a 'Failing Newspaper' Under the Newspaper Preservation Act," Newspaper Research Journal 9:75-76 (Fall 1987).

5. Stephen Lacy, "Impact of Repealing the Newspaper Preservation Act," Newspaper Research Journal 11:4 (Winter 1990).

6. William B. Blankenburg, "Consolidation in Two-Newspaper Firms," Journalism Quarterly 62:474-481 (Autumn 1985).

7. Mark Fitzgerald and Stace Kramer, "Three Strikes and It's Gone," Editor & Publisher, Nov. 8, 1986, p. 10; Michael Massing, "The Missouri Compromise," Columbia Journalism Review 20:35-41 (November/December 1981).

8. Joel Achenbach, "The Bottom Line: What Happened to Miami's Oldest Newspaper was a Simple Matter of Profit . . . and Loss," The Miami Herald Tropic Magazine, Jan. 29, 1989, pp. 9-15; Andrew Radolf, "Miami News May Fold," Editor & Publisher, Oct. 22, 1988, p. 48.

9. Stephen R. Barnett, "The JOA Scam," Columbia Journalism Review 30:48 (November/December 1991).

10. Mike Feinsllber, "A Tale of Two Newspapers," Las Vegas Sun, Jan. 8, 1992, p. 7D; George Garneau, "Knoxville JOA to be Dissolved," Editor & Publisher, June 16, 1990, pp. 13, 59.

11. Lawrence Roberts, "Saving a Newspaper, Seattle Style," Washington Journalism Review 4:13 (January/February 1982).

12. John C. Busterna, "Improving Editorial and Economic Competition with a Modified Newspaper Preservation Act," Newspaper Research Journal 8:75 (Summer 1987); John C. Busterna, "Newspaper JOAs and the Logic of Predation," Communication and the Law 10:3 (1988).

13. Walter E. Niebauer Jr., "Effects of the Newspaper Preservation Act on the Suburban Press," Newspaper Research Journal 5:41-49 (Summer 1984).

14. Bonnie Lynn Henderson, "Impact of the Seattle Joint Operating Agreement on the Local Suburban Press," unpublished master's thesis, University of Oregon, 1983.

15. Dennis Holder, "Joint Operating Agreements: If You Can't Beat 'Em, Join 'Em," Washington Journalism Review 4:24 (November 1982).

16. "Newspaper Preservation Act: A Critique," Indiana Law Journal 46:410 (1971).

17. Barnett, op. cit.

18. Stephen R. Barnett, "Preserving Newspapers or Monopoly?" The Nation November 6, 1989, p. 1.

19. Eric J. Gertler, "Michigan Citizens for an Independent Press v. Attorney General: Subscribing to Newspaper Joint Operating Agreements or the Decline of Newspapers?" The American University Law Review 39:141 (Fall 1989).

20. Birthney Ardoin, "A Comparison of Newspapers Under Joint Printing Contracts," Journalism Quarterly 50:340-347 (Summer 1973). See also Ronald G. Hicks and James S. Featherston, "Duplication of Newspaper Content in Contrasting Ownership Situations," Journalism Quarterly 55:549-553 (Autumn 1978).

21. Randolph Behr, "Newspaper Preservation Law Produces Windfalls," Washington Post, July 13, 1986, p. A11.

22. Stephen Lacy, "Content of Joint Operation Newspapers," in Robert G. Picard, et. al., eds., Press Concentration and Monopoly: New Perspectives on Newspaper Ownership and Operation. Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Corp., 1988, pp. 147-160.

23. Robert M. Entman, "Newspaper Competition and First Amendment Ideals: Does Monopoly Matter?" Journal of Communication 35:147-165 (Summer 1985).

24. Barry R. Litman and Janet Bridges, "An Economic Analysis of Daily Newspaper Performance," Newspaper Research Journal 7:9-26 (Spring 1986).

25. John C. Busterna, Kathleen A. Hansen and Jean Ward, "Competition, Ownership, Newsroom and Library Resources in Large Newspapers," Journalism Quarterly 68:736 (Winter 1991).

26. The following are the more recent studies that have looked at the content performance of competing newspapers: Stephen Lacy, "A Model of Demand for News: Impact of Competition on Newspaper Content," Journalism Quarterly 66:40-48, 128 (Spring 1989); Stephen Lacy, "The Effects of Intracity Competition on Daily Newspaper Content," Journalism Quarterly 64:281-290 (Autumn 1987); Thomas R. Donohue and Theodore L. Glasser, "Homogeneity in Coverage of Connecticut Newspapers," Journalism Quarterly 55:592-596 (Autumn 1978); John C. Schweitzer and Elaine Goldman, "Does Newspaper Competition Make a Difference to Readers?" Journalism Quarterly 52:706-710 (Winter 1975); Busterna, Hansen and Ward, op. cit.; Litman and Bridges, op. cit.; Entman, op. cit.; Hicks and Featherston, op. cit.

27. Participants did not include sports or special section writers or editors, photographers or artists.

28. George Garneau, "JOA OK'd," Editor & Publisher, Nov. 18, 1989, pp. 9, 34.

29. Niebauer, op. cit.; Henderson, op. cit.

30. With regard to jointly operated newspapers, see Ardoin, op. cit.; Hicks and Featherston, op. cit.

31. Lacy, "Content of Joint Operation Newspapers," op. cit., p. 160.

32. See Maxwell E. McCombs, "Effect of Monopoly in Cleveland on Diversity of Newspaper Content," Journalism Quarterly 64:740-744, 792 (Winter 1987).

33. Walter E. Niebauer Jr., "Trends of Circulation and Penetration Following Failure of Metropolitan Daily Newspapers," unpublished paper presented to the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication national convention, San Antonio, Texas, August 1987.

## Table 1: Newspapers in Joint Operating Agreements: 1991

(Newspapers in bold type participated in the study.)

| City/Newspaper | Circulation | Year JOA began | Year of renewal or expiration |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Albuquerque, N.M.** | | | |
| **Journal** | **121,030** | 1933 | 2022 |
| **Tribune** | **40,118** | | |
| **Birmingham** | | | |
| **News** | **169,660** | 1950 | 2015 |
| **Post-Herald** | **61,979** | | |
| **Charleston, W.V.** | | | |
| **Gazette** | **55,023** | 1958 | 2036 |
| **Daily Mail** | **50,353** | | |
| **Chattanooga, Tenn.** | | | |
| **News-Free Press** | **54,528** | 1980 | 2000 |
| **Times** | **46,381** | | |
| **Cincinnati** | | | |
| Enquirer | 199,012 | 1979 | 2007 |
| Post | 104,264 | | |
| **Detroit** | | | |
| **Free Press** | **636,182** | 1989 | 2089 |
| **News** | **500,980** | | |
| **El Paso** | | | |
| Times | 61,305 | 1936 | 2015 |
| **Herald-Post** | **28,205** | | |
| **Evansville, Ind.** | | | |
| Courier | 63,175 | 1938 | 1998 |
| **Press** | **35,567** | | |
| **Fort Wayne, Ind.** | | | |
| **Journal-Gazette** | **63,974** | 1950 | 2020 |
| **News-Sentinel** | **56,254** | | |
| **Honolulu** | | | |
| Advertiser | 97,890 | 1962 | 2042 |
| Star-Bulletin | 88,927 | | |
| **Knoxville, Tenn.** | | | |
| **News-Sentinel** | **104,167** | 1957 | 2005* |
| Journal | 40,809 | | |
| **Las Vegas, Nev.** | | | |
| **Review-Journal** | **135,311** | 1990 | 2040 |
| Sun | 33,621 | | |

## Table 1: Newspapers in Joint Operating Agreements: 1991 (Continued)

| City/Newspaper | Circulation | Year JOA began | Year of renewal or expiration |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Nashville** | | | |
| **Tennessean** | **127,936** | 1937 | 2022 |
| Banner | 61,979 | | |
| **Pittsburgh** | | | |
| Press | 231,910 | 1961 | 1999 |
| Post-Gazette | 162,520 | | |
| **Salt Lake City** | | | |
| **Tribune** | **109,523** | 1952 | 2012 |
| **Deseret News** | **60,775** | | |
| **San Francisco** | | | |
| **Chronicle** | **562,887** | 1965 | 2005 |
| Examiner | 136,346 | | |
| **Seattle** | | | |
| **Times** | **233,995** | 1983 | 2032 |
| Post-Intelligencer | 205,357 | | |
| **Shreveport, La.** | | | |
| Times | 75,003 | 1953 | 1994** |
| **Journal** | **17,641** | | |
| **Tucson** | | | |
| **Daily Star** | **84,131** | 1940 | 2015 |
| **Citizen** | **49,375** | | |
| **Tulsa, Okla.** | | | |
| **World** | **125,037** | 1941 | 1996 |
| Tribune | 66,816 | | |
| **York, Pa.** | | | |
| **Record** | **74,897** | 1990 | 2090 |
| **Dispatch** | **40,832** | | |

Sources: Editor & Publisher Yearbook 1991; '91 Facts About Newspapers. Washington, D.C.: American Newspaper Publishers Association, April 1991.

*The partnership ended Jan. 1, 1992. The Knoxville Journal became a weekly newspaper.

**The pact was terminated March 30, 1991. The Shreveport Journal no longer exists except for an editorial page that runs under its masthead in the Times.

## Table 2: JOA Journalists' Support for Changes in Joint Operating Agreements

| | (N=269) |
|---|---|
| Joint operating agreements should not be changed. | 45%* |
| JOAs should only apply to independently owned papers. | 22 |
| Joint operations should be permitted to operate only for as long as it takes to recoup previous losses. | 19 |
| Joint operating arrangements should be discontinued. | 15 |
| JOAs should be run as public utilities and required to print any local newspaper desiring services. | 7 |

*Frequencies do not add up to 100% because respondents could provide more than one answer.

## Table 3: Differences in JOA Journalists' Attitudes Toward Joint Operating Agreements

| | Mid-size Newspapers (N=108) | Large Newspapers (N=129) | Total (N=237) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Editorial independence is inhibited in JOAs by the close relationship required to make joint business decisions. | | | |
| Agree | 19% | 32%* | 26** |
| Neutral | 4 | 3 | 4 |
| Disagree | 73 | 61 | 67 |
| The level of news gathering rivalry between competing papers is usually unchanged when they become jointly operated. | | | |
| Agree | 69 | 58* | 64 |
| Neutral | 9 | 7 | 8 |
| Disagree | 17 | 30 | 24 |
| A joint venture provides the incentive to cut news coverage costs. | | | |
| Agree | 39 | 48* | 44 |
| Neutral | 17 | 12 | 15 |
| Disagree | 29 | 37 | 33 |

*p < .01 (Chi-square analysis)

**Frequencies do not add up to 100% because "not sure" responses are not shown in the table.